

MUGGERIDGED
BY REALITY
JOSEPH EPSTEIN

the weekly

Standard

JUNE 17, 1996

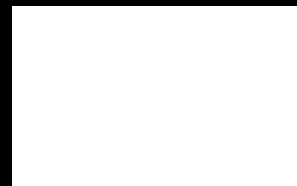
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THE 89 PERCENT SOLUTION

It is a common right-wing complaint that the prestige media are reluctant to report on the Clinton scandals. Is it true? Well, on June 5, the House committee looking into Travelgate released documents showing that the White House had requested and received confidential FBI background materials on travel-office martyr Billy Dale . . . a full seven months after he was fired.

The midday news shook Washington, because the request form bore the name of ex-counsel Bernard Nussbaum. And the form featured a false claim, also illegal, that the information was needed because Dale was being considered for "access" to the White House. Clearly and unquestionably, someone at the White House was digging for dirt on Dale in order to justify what the administration had done to him. Either it was Nussbaum, in which case the White House counsel broke the law, or it was somebody who used

Nussbaum's name, in which case somebody in the White House was using Nussbaum's name illegally. FBI director Louis Freeh quickly vowed a "thorough inquiry."

So what did the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* put on their front pages the next morning? Oh, the *Times* had an article on a French colonial fort in South Carolina and one on a gadget that is supposed to track political advertising on television. It also published an FBI story—on the bureau's strategy in the Montana-ranch case. And two local New York stories. There were a lot more articles, too, between page one and page 24. It was on page 24 that a brief account of the travel-office revelation finally appeared.

How about the *Post*, watchdog of the nation's capital and proud linchpin of Watergate? It ran page-one stories on "infant TV actors" and a species of shrimp found off the coast of Belize. It, too, had an FBI story: about the bureau's

Internet home page. And it even had an independent-counsel story: on the expense of the four counsels now investigating the Clinton administration. The paper's travel-office report appeared on page four.

The world wearies of conservative carping about press bias. But sometimes carpers have a point. Travelgate did not get the attention it deserved, surely, because the editors at these papers thought they had done enough scandal coverage with the Whitewater guilty verdicts the week before. That mindset—that inclination to give Clinton an easier time of it than the mainstream media would a politician with whom they are out of sympathy—is what press bias is all about. And why those who deny its existence, and pooh-pooh the recent report that 89 percent of the American press voted for Bill Clinton in 1992, are being deliberately obtuse, or dishonest, or merely stupid.

MORE HIJINKS WITH HIL-

LARY'S PALS

When Bill Clinton nominated his old friend Micky Kantor's wife to the board of directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting last week, the embarrassing saga of Martha Buchanan officially became ancient history. Heidi Schulman (Mrs. Kantor) will replace Buchanan, who resigned in March after the White House made it clear that the furor over her alleged sexual harassment of a male CPB staffer in 1992 meant she had to go.

After Buchanan's shenanigans made news earlier this year, Clinton White House spinners were only too eager to point out that Buchanan was named to the CPB board by George Bush. What they *didn't* say was that only two years ago, the Clinton White House quietly tried to make Buchanan the board's chairman. And why? All because of fellow board member Diane Blair—Hillary Clinton's close friend and the wife of Tyson Foods lawyer Jim Blair. You remember Blair. He's the fellow who made Mrs. Clinton that \$100,000 in instant profit trading cattle futures.

Scrapbook



After Clinton's election, the opportunistic Buchanan struck a strategic alliance with Blair. In September 1994, with Diane Blair's backing, Buchanan decided to run for board chairman.

The deciding vote fell to board member Frank Cruz, who had to vote by absentee ballot from California. Cruz got a phone call from White House aide Craig Smith informing him that Bill Clinton himself wanted Cruz to vote for Buchanan. Cruz explained that he'd already voted for Buchanan's rival, Henry Caution. CPB sources say that Diane Blair tipped the White House to Cruz's intention to vote against her friend Buchanan. A few days later, Smith called back and said it was *very* important that Cruz change his vote to Buchanan. He declined. Buchanan lost out. Bizarre, no?

YOU'RE HAVEMANN MY BABY

On June 4, the *Washington Post* featured a front-page story criticizing the current round of welfare reform. The reformers, you see, want single mothers under the age of 18 to live at home with their parents. But, the *Post*'s Judith Havemann wrote, that just won't work, and we should all forget about it, because of one Dakeyia Scott of Lansing, Mich.

Scott just turned 17 and has a one-year-old son, Davion. And poor Dakeyia just can't live with her mother. She *can't*. Why? "We have fights and arguments. Davion's my child, and she acts like she's the boss." When Dakeyia and her mother live together, Dakeyia says, "she calls me names and stuff, that I'm so young. She makes me feel bad." Dakeyia could think of no examples.

So now we have a new standard for parental abuse. A mother tries to exercise some authority over her teenager. And the mother tells the girl, who got pregnant when she was 15, that she is young and maybe not totally responsible. So Dakeyia is entitled to live apart from her mother, supported by the taxpayer. Okay,

Havemann has convinced us: Cancel welfare reform.

KEYES FOR AOL PRESIDENT

Who's on the Internet? Not Clintonites. The America Online politics page conducts a poll on the presidential race. Between 275 and 700 people post their votes each day. In a head to head matchup, Dole beats Clinton 74.6 percent to 25.4 percent. But Dole shouldn't get too excited. Libertarian candidate Harry Browne beats Clinton 61 percent to 39 percent. And guess what? Alan Keyes beats the president 64 percent to 36 percent. And whom do these voters especially detest? Ross Perot. Good for them. Maybe they've been reading THE WEEKLY STANDARD?

Casual

REPUBLICANS AND CAMPESINOS

In a dirt-floored, thatched-roof bamboo hut in the mountainous jungles of northeastern Nicaragua, a group of poverty-stricken campesinos were complaining about the government to a young American woman who was meticulously taking down their grievances in a loose-leaf notebook. Ten minutes earlier, when Maria DeCesare first walked into this makeshift voter-registration center, the campesinos had been stiff and reserved. But it had taken them only a moment to sense that this confident woman who greeted them in exemplary Spanish and gently requested permission to ask them a few questions had come to help. Many reported they had walked for hours for the chance to register, only to find that registration materials had not been delivered and registration centers had not been opened. Later that evening, the local priest hugged and kissed Maria DeCesare again and again. "When you go back to Managua," Padre Pedro said, "you will tell the world about the problems the campesinos are having in the registration." And she did.

There are probably no more than three dozen Americans who give a fig about the problems of the 400,000 campesinos of central and northern Nicaragua. And guess what? Like Maria DeCesare, they're almost all Republicans. I discovered this rather astonishing anomaly as a member of a delegation sent to Nicaragua on May 30 to observe the first weekend of voter registration, a critical phase in an electoral process that culminates in presidential elections this October. The observer mission was organized by DeCesare's employer, the International Republican Institute

(IRI), and received vital support in Washington from a handful of Republican staff aides in the House and Senate—a dwindling but still hardy band of former Reaganites who were once described by Sandinista foreign minister Miguel d'Escoto as "robots of the maniacal Abrams." Elliott Abrams, that is, Reagan's assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs and my boss as well during the ugliest days of the contra-aid battles.

My traveling companion was Roger Noriega, who had worked to win military aid for the contras. He's now one of House International Relations Committee chairman Ben Gilman's top aides. Scheduled to arrive for the second weekend of registration was Dan Fisk, another senior Abrams aide who now looks after Nicaragua and other Latin American countries for Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Jesse Helms.

And I found young Republican volunteers dancing the merengue with the locals in Managua's restaurants, riding on horseback along the muddy trails of Nicaragua's rainy-season jungles, and floating down the Rama River on flatbed *panga* boats to reach the most inaccessible voter-registration centers.

When did all these Republicans become such committed Maoists? The contra force supported by these Reaganites in the 1980s turns out in retrospect to have been the spearhead of probably the largest peasant movement in the history of Latin America. As we traveled through the provinces of Matagalpa, Boaco, Chontales, Jinotega, Zelaya, and along the Coco and Rama rivers, it became clear to all of us in the IRI delegation that most of the 300,000-400,000 resi-

dents of this vast stretch of Nicaragua were staunch opponents of the Sandinistas, steady supporters of the contras, and likely supporters of the leading anti-government candidate in the coming elections, Arnaldo Alemán. The Nicaraguan government knows it, too. Hence the cumbersome and inefficient ad hoc registration process specifically designed just for this region of the country.

The once-famous, campesino-loving "Sandalistas"—the Birkenstock-clad American leftists who swarmed around Nicaragua during and after the Sandinista revolution in 1979—are all gone. They lost interest in the peasant cooperatives over which they once swooned, when those very same peasants voted overwhelmingly against the revolution in the 1990 elections. There are no Sandalistas in evidence anywhere, from Managua cafés to the dirt roads and small farms in the hinterlands of Matagalpa and Zelaya.

To the extent that the Left cares about Nicaragua at all, it supports the Managua government and its sometimes repressive military. Along with the Carter Center, it spiritedly defends a flawed electoral process that seems consciously designed to disenfranchise many of Nicaragua's poorest citizens. And it opposes as "interference" IRI's efforts to ensure that those peasants get a chance to vote.

While the Sandalistas ignore the Nicaraguan peasants they once so adored, many of the same Republicans who care so much about the peasants of Nicaragua hold no similar affection for the peasants of Haiti, who voted in droves for Jean Bertrand Aristide. But enough of the search for post-Cold War consistency. It was reward enough in this new era to watch Maria DeCesare give some poor campesinos hope of doing what many of their fathers and brothers had given their lives to do: Vote.

ROBERT KAGAN

KEEP THE ARTS, BUT ABOLISH THE NEA

I have received grants from the NEA both as a photographer and a curator, and I share many of Joseph Epstein's anxieties ("W.C. Fields Was Wrong," June 3).

But it is hard to know what is important about the present and what about the present has enduring value. Epstein gives no examples of overlooked artists who deserve recognition, nor does he offer a sense of what should replace contemporary ways of thinking about culture. Postmodernism and multiculturalism are not great ideas (certainly not as good as modernism), but what else is new?

Meanwhile, for every grant to artists that offends elite sensibilities there are scores of NEA grants for exhibitions of work that Epstein would put into his pantheon of great art. For every trendy museum exhibition there is at least one with "impressionism" in the title. Like so many other high-culture institutions, art museums have refined the art of pandering to just the "public" that Epstein feels is being left out of the conversation. The problem is not the bad or small ideas that grate on me and Epstein and soon will be forgotten. The problem is a paucity of new and vital ways to inhabit the world.

TOM BAMBERGER
MILWAUKEE, WI

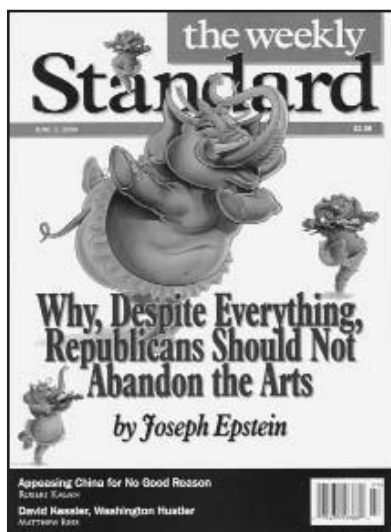
I greatly enjoyed Joseph Epstein's informative and evenhanded overview of American arts policy, but I cannot stomach his conclusion that an arts policy is worth the trouble.

The best thing about the new Republican majority is the heightened awareness that taxes and government are, at best, necessary evils to be minimized. An individual's money and property belong to him by right and are not for the federal government to divvy up to further the so-called public good. If dance or classical music dies out without public funding, then so be it. It is more important that policy be just, in the Lockean sense so agreeable to the founding fathers, than spiritually edifying. Screw 'em.

JAMES SILVERGLAD
NEW YORK, NY

Joseph Epstein gives eloquent testimony to the failings of the NEA. But he neglects to state the logical conclusion: Federal "arts policy" has failed because the NEA bureaucracy's decisions conflict with the genuine artistic needs and desires of the American people.

The NEA recently awarded \$35,000 to the Phoenix Art Museum soon after it opened a show featuring various forms of flag desecration—including a flag made out of strips of human flesh and hair. Jeff Jacoby noted the message in his *Boston Globe* column: "If you stuff an American flag in the toilet and invite people to look at it, Uncle Sam will send



you money. Do we have an enlightened government, or what?" Those who truly care about improving the quality of American art should insist upon the abolition of the NEA.

LAURENCE JARVIK
WASHINGTON, DC

BOORDA'S SAMURAI HONOR

I've come to rely on THE WEEKLY STANDARD for principled arguments regarding the issues of our time. However, Albert Pyle's treatment of Admiral Jeremy Boorda's death ("Naval Justice," June 3) perplexes me. Pyle conjures up and praises a Navy where the "real sailors" "understood" Boorda's suicide as the honorable thing to do. Even if Pyle had some evidence that Navy enlisted men all harbor this

samurai mentality, why would he write a near-endorsement of suicide?

The shocking thing about Boorda's death is not that he took his own life—this is tragic, but not shocking—but that official Washington did not treat it as a suicide. From the eulogies at Boorda's memorial service to the commencement speech Gen. John Shalikashvili gave at the Naval Academy, one would have thought that Boorda had expired in his sleep or had been killed by a crazy seaman (which, in a real sense, he was).

In an earlier age, there was a stigma attached to suicide. Treating suicide with benign indifference is a most dangerous development. Pyle's article, acknowledging Boorda's suicide but virtually declaring it "honorable," goes even further down the path of this madness.

NICHOLAS DUJMOVIC
STERLING, VA

Albert Pyle's piece nearly canonizes Jeremy Boorda, when really a kaddish would have been more fitting. Boorda deserted his post, abdicated his responsibilities, broke his oath of service, and shamed the military and his country by killing himself. Somewhere in the chain of duty, honor, country, Boorda's family got smacked the hardest.

Suicide does not restore honor. The honorable way out is to face the music, accept judgment of peers, and have courage to survive with dignity. Boorda's suicide is not justified by the end of restoring honor. A shameful, cowardly act of suicide is the ultimate surrender to failure.

JIM SKEESE
SAN DIEGO, CA

NOT THE GREATEST TEAM

I couldn't agree more with Robert D. Novak's "72 Wins? Big Deal" (June 3). What the Chicago Bulls have done this year is impressive but must be regarded in light of the current dismal condition of pro basketball.

As Novak points out, the league's talent has been grossly diluted by expansion. Also, since salaries and endorsement income flow disproportionately to hyped players rather than more talent-

Correspondence

ed ones, popular college players, and now high-school kids with visions of millions dancing in their heads, are leaving school early to enter the big leagues. These players are long on flash and short on fundamental skills.

The Los Angeles Lakers of the 80s, as well as that decade's Boston Celtics and Detroit Pistons teams, even the Bulls' three-peat team of the early 90s, would have trounced the current Bulls. The best team ever? That's like saying if Clinton wins reelection he'll be the greatest president ever.

GREGG M. TURNER
KEENE, NH

A KULTURKAMPF IN COURT

The recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Romer v. Evans* was an unfortunate and disturbing display of judicial activism by Justice Kennedy and his happy band of rights-creating legal eagles. David Frum's commentary on the *Romer* ruling was on point ("Suspect Jurisprudence," June 3). The majority's analysis is more befitting of a sociological thesis than a sound constitutional interpretation. However, even Frum's scathing indictment does not do justice to the preposterous reasoning of Justice Kennedy.

Frum states that laws subject to the rational-basis test, such as Colorado's Amendment 2, will be overturned only if the distinctions drawn by such laws are "entirely irrational." As correctly implied by Frum, a court applying the rational-basis test will examine legislative history to determine the purpose of enacting the law at issue and decide whether that purpose was rational.

However, judicial application of the rational-basis test has been even more lenient towards the government because the court has repeatedly defined the standard so as to authorize the judicial *fabrication* of a rational purpose even if such purpose cannot be reasonably gleaned from the legislative history.

The intellectually honest (but nevertheless indefensible) approach for Justice Kennedy would have been to read homosexual rights into the Constitution and strike down the Colorado law on the basis that it discriminates against a "suspect category"—homosexuality—without the ex-

tremely high level of justification required to meet the strict-scrutiny standard.

The fact that the court overturned the Colorado law upon application of the rational-basis standard indicates nothing more than that the justices did not look very hard for a rational purpose underlying the majoritarian will of Colorado voters.

The court's feeble search for a rational purpose is a striking deviation from the court's consistent application of the rational-basis test in a long line of other cases. More distressingly, however, it indicates that intellectual dishonesty has now infected a majority of the court.

RAY BEEMAN
SAN PEDRO, CA

David Frum's normally acute legal mind fails him in his discussion of *Romer v. Evans*. In two important ways, he misses the decision's thrust.

"Colorado is permitted to treat all sorts of people unequally," he notes. "It can build a highway to one town but not another." Of course that is true. But Frum here misses the distinction that underpins the majority opinion. It is one thing not to build a highway to, say, Aspen. It is another to pass a constitutional amendment saying that Aspen, alone among all Colorado cities, may have no highways built to it, not even highways built at the locals' own initiative and expense. Surely many reasonable courts would take a dim view of such a law if it were based on nothing more than the state's dislike of Aspen.

Ah, says Frum, but disapproval of homosexuals—as opposed to "suspect class" minorities or, perhaps, people living in Aspen—is constitutionally sanctioned, because in *Bowers v. Hardwick* the Supreme Court upheld laws against homosexual sodomy. "Colorado could, if it wanted to, outlaw homosexual acts entirely, in much the same way that it can outlaw marijuana smoking." True. But again Frum misses Justice Kennedy's point, which is that Colorado's Amendment 2 was far broader than could be rationally justified by a desire to curtail sodomy.

The amendment banned anti-discrimination laws based on homosexual "orientation, conduct, practices, or relationships." Effectively, it targeted anyone who could be spotted as a homosex-

ual, whether that person committed any particular sex act or not.

I grant that open homosexuals are likelier to engage in homosexual conduct than heterosexuals. But Justice Kennedy was not unreasonable in insisting that identifying and fencing off a class of persons cannot properly be viewed as "rational" if it is based merely upon aversion to the class itself, rather than upon the behavior of individuals. The truth, of course, is that Amendment 2 was not saying, "Don't commit sodomy." It was saying, "If you're a homosexual, shut up about it."

JONATHAN RAUCH
WASHINGTON, DC

HEALTHY CONSERVATIVES

I am sure the "Casual" column is just fun and games, but Victor Matus's "Mom and Deep-Fried Apple Pie" (May 27) brought out what I feel is the Achilles heel of the conservative movement. The article hectors the health-conscious, concluding that "low-fat means low-taste," a dining generalization only a comic could love.

And it gets worse. John Podhoretz makes "chewed on stogies and downed martinis" look glamorous ("Dole, the GOP, and the Genetically Endowed," May 27). And Chris Caldwell likes mass-produced "function food" that even the "pickiest diner would be happy to eat" ("Five Ways America Keeps Getting Better," May 27).

Food is more than eye-popping, lip-pleasing taste. I have seen younger and younger people lined up at the doctors' offices. Food is a building block for your physical body.

DANIEL R. PETERSON
LIVINGSTON, MT

THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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FEAR NOT THE TAX CUT

Like the hero in an old Hollywood war epic, Bob Dole leads his battered GOP platoon through the mud, searching for a fiscal-policy highway to 1996 electoral victory. The path ahead divides in two. The map from the brain trust at Republican headquarters suggests a right turn is in order: broad and deep income-tax cuts.

But a freshly posted road sign points left, not right. And a friendly MP at the intersection tells Dole his map is wrong. *Big tax cuts are budget-busters*, the MP says, *and unnecessary in today's vibrant economy. Stop, think hard, and go the other way, Captain Dole, before rash irresponsibility gets you killed by offended swing voters.*

We've seen this movie before, so we know our protagonist is being set up for an ambush. The road sign is backwards; Dole's tax-cut map is accurate. And if Dole would take a closer look at that friendly MP, he would discover his true identity: Clinton-sympathizing *Wall Street Journal* fifth-columnist Albert R. Hunt.

Ignore him, Bob!

But read him carefully first, for Hunt's June 6 *Journal* essay called "The Tax Cut Trap" actually does the Dole campaign a genuine service. It is the perfect "respectable" gloss on the Clinton administration's likely critique of any broad-scale Dole tax proposal. And as time goes by this summer, that critique is certain to be echoed and amplified by "sophisticated" journalists everywhere, schooled as they are to dump on any election-year tax idea as a mere gimmick. Or worse.

Here's the Hunt-style case against tax cuts.

The economic rationale. There is no rationale, says Mr. Hunt, only discredited supply-side "snake oil." It's true, as he points out, that inflation, unemployment, and interest rates are now quite low and that the federal deficit has been sharply reduced since 1993. But it is not so evident, as Hunt implies, that Presi-

dent Clinton and his party deserve the lion's share of credit for these accomplishments. And it is certainly untrue, despite administration cheerleading, that the American economy Clinton has supervised is "the healthiest in nearly three decades." Overall economic growth is relatively weak: weaker than the post-World War II average, weaker than in the last five economic expansions, weaker than in the 1980s, and weaker than in the final year of George Bush's presidency.

Clinton-era American incomes remain famously stagnant. Median household income has declined since 1992 if you adjust for inflation. Median family income is flat. Real "total compensation"—average wages, salaries, and benefits—went up just 0.4 percent in 1995, the worst such number in more than 14 years.

Taxes are not irrelevant to these problems. High taxes depress growth. Low growth depresses income. And higher marginal rates

penalize income growth directly. As a share of gross domestic product, taxes (federal, state, and local all together) hit a historic high last year. Federal taxes, now effectively double what they were for the average family in the early 1960s, absorbed a virtually unprecedented 20.4 percent of gross domestic product in 1995. That typical family now spends more on total taxes than it does on food, clothing, and shelter combined. That typical family is overtaxed. And it is financially pinched. Is that not a legitimate "economic rationale" for federal tax cuts?

The "fairness" issue. Al Hunt makes great sport of the 15 percent, across-the-board federal income-tax cut now under discussion inside the Dole campaign. It would be a "considerable redistribution of income to the more affluent," he writes, and would "sock it to the middle class." The Clintonistas predictably talk like this too. But what exactly are they talking about? Earnings exempted from taxation aren't "redistrib-

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uted" anywhere, strictly speaking. And if everyone gets a cut, how could anyone be getting "socked"?

There's nothing particularly "fair" about the federal tax-rate schedule Clinton inherited from Bush (and has now made even more "progressive"). Americans with taxable incomes between roughly \$23,000 and \$57,000 pay an effective federal tax rate *higher* than the one paid by people earning more than twice as much (if you count payroll taxes). The details of Bob Dole's possible 15 percent cut have yet to be revealed. But if such a cut were somehow applied to payroll as well as income taxes, it would correct this ghastly anomaly. And immediately save each middle-income family a *minimum* of several thousand dollars each year. Hunt may sniff at such sums as paltry. Most Americans would not.

The deficit. Hopes for a balanced budget, Hunt says, would entirely disappear. The White House loves this argument. "If the Republican party no longer worships on the altar of the balanced budget," Clinton press secretary Mike McCurry quips, "that's news." McCurry, of course, is unfamiliar with that particular church; Democrats visit only as tourists.

Look. Dole's putative 15 percent cut would cost the government about \$90 billion a year. No Dole partisan pretends that such a cut would "pay for itself." But if it increased GDP growth by just one percentage point—one-fourth of the average annual growth that occurred after the Reagan and Kennedy tax cuts—the Treasury would, by most expert estimates, recover well over half that "lost" revenue. And room already included for tax cuts in the balanced budgets approved by the current Republican Congress would make up most of the rest. Solved.

The partisan effect. This is where the Clinton White House and Hunt finally part company. Slightly. Professional Democrats do not pretend to be concerned for Dole's political future or his immortal soul.

Hunt, with ostentatious disingenuousness, worries over both. Taxes "are not a high priority for the vast majority of Americans," he writes. Why, then, should Dole throw aside the deficit-cutting principles he has "championed for years" and lose his "credibility" (and, by implication, the election) in the process? In other words, tax cuts are a political loser.

President Clinton doesn't think so. He has just proposed a means-tested, two-year, \$1,500 tax credit for higher-education expenses. He wants us to believe, as he recently proclaimed at Princeton University (annual tuition, room, and board: \$29,000), that this munificence will grant "every single solitary soul in this country the chance to be most fully alive." It won't, of course. It's a narrowly targeted tax advantage that will, by increasing demand for higher education, likely raise tuitions a corresponding amount.

Still, Clinton's tax credit *sounds* good. People will like it. And Clinton's advancement of it indicates that Hunt is completely, fabulously wrong when he insists that taxes aren't a big issue for voters. Poll data refute Hunt, too. In a January Gallup poll, 83 percent of respondents said that federal taxes were a "top priority," a "high priority," or "very important" in their decision about whom to choose for president. In April, Gallup asked respondents whether they thought their federal income taxes were "too high" or "about right." The answer was "too high" by almost two to one.

Obviously, then, a Dole tax cut that promised *palpable* benefits to as many Americans as possible would help his presidential prospects this year. And there are no serious policy grounds on which to object to such a tax cut. Dole should politely reject those of his "well wishers" who advise him otherwise. He should move soon, and swiftly, and decisively. For when Al Hunt attempts to ambush him with such friendly counsel, Dole must really be onto something.

—David Tell, for the Editors

'NO PLACE FOR KIDS'

by Matt Labash

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION'S Kenneth Weinstein was talking trash about your mother. Or so it seemed shortly before Marian Wright Edelman's 200,000-strong "Stand for Children" at the Lincoln Memorial on June 1, which Weinstein called the "Last Stand for Big Government." Blasphemer! After all, *Harper's Bazaar* coronated the dear woman, honcho of the Children's Defense Fund, as "America's

universal mother." Just who is Kenneth Weinstein to call the mother of us all a liar?

Edelman promised the march would be "a non-partisan call to action" and "our only agenda is our children"—not kicking the slats out of the welfare-reforming 104th Congress, as some said was her wont. And indeed, the day started innocuously enough. There were Girl Scouts and grandparents and C-list celebrities of yore, like *The Fall Guy*'s Heather Thomas (known as "the other Heather"—meaning, not Locklear) and *Dallas*'s Morgan Brittany (known as "the other Morgan"—mean-

ing, not Fairchild). And then, of course, there were the children. Like those chipper rascals in the 2,000-voice "America Sings!" choir, with their veins pumping Yoohoo as they danced the stilted boxstep one sees in Jacques d'Amboise chorus lines and the very worst Elvis movies.

But there were early reasons to doubt the ecumenical intentions of the organizers, like that abrupt cut-off at the press tent when I asked a lineup of celebrities if there were any registered Republicans in the bunch. "That's a private issue," an event staffer chided.

Children were indeed the focus of many groups in evidence on the Washington Mall—though that focus was not quite what was advertised. Instead, there were those who express vociferous concern that there are too many children—groups like Zero Population Growth and Planned Parenthood. They strode hand in hand with people like Mike Golash, selling his Communist newspaper with the headline, "Capitalism: No place for kids."

The Sierra Club was protecting America's environment from the 104th Congress "for our families" and "for our future." And the Women's Legal Defense Fund said protecting our children means "rejecting punitive and short-sighted welfare reform."

Though People for the American Way isn't typically thought of as a children's advocacy group, representative Galen Nelson made it clear that *everything* is a children's issue. "All our issues—civil rights, civil liberties, and separation of church and state—certainly are important to children and affect their lives." Not that he's poisoning the bipartisan spirit of the day, but, after all, "look at which party is hostile to working families and children right now—it's the Republicans."

As for Edelman's speech, it contained no less than 11 barely masked references to the evil Congress. This

was still a cough and a spit compared with her orgasmic refrain: 87 references to the "children" (excluding "infants," "babies," etc.) in a 25-minute speech.

Cynics may charge that Edelman is the Garry Kasparov of the children-as-pawns movement, a case buttressed by E. Z. Cleghorn, a young blind boy at the post-ceremony press conference. With the body of a nine-year-old but the pipes of a Harlem preacher, Cleghorn ranted like a wound-up automaton: "It is time that America stops not allowing every child to

have health care and welfare funds. IT IS TIME the American people took a stand for children!" He may well have been coached by Edelman, who commented earlier that "the social safety net is being destroyed" and the current "morally indefensible" welfare proposals are "fatally flawed, callous anti-child assaults."

Republicans have cause to take umbrage, having advocated a \$500 per child tax credit, school vouchers, student-loan interest deductions, and the Crimes Against Children Act. Over the last two years, there have been spending increases for foster care and adoption assistance, Head Start, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, even school lunches. In the most recent Republican budget, the states would get \$2.9 bil-

lion more over six years than current law permits for cash block grants replacing current federal welfare supports as well as for child care and child welfare. Even with some cuts and reduced growth, social services funding would still increase by 35 percent by 2002.

All of this, of course, sounds as unsexy as it does irrelevant when Edelman floats from the dais her daunting statistics like the number of children killed, dropping out of school, or reported abused or neglected—problems that would seem better solved by good parenting than by a jihad against Republican lawmakers.



Marian Wright Edelman

Chas Fagan

But if all the indignation seems a bit misdirected, we can find solace in the words of Malik Yoba, preeminent welfare policy expert and star of *New York Under-*

cover: "The idea is to get together and stand for something." Confused pause. "Like children, yeah, that's what we're doing!" ♦

CAMPAIGN SHENANIGANS

by C. Boyden Gray

ONE UNANTICIPATED BENEFIT of Bob Dole's decision to give up his Senate seat and majority leadership is that he may throw the White House rapid-response effort into legal jeopardy. The Clintonites have made brilliant use of White House officials to answer, attack, and preempt Bob Dole, an effort led by presidential assistants Gene Sperling and Bruce Reed. No sooner does the Dole campaign merely announce a speech than the counterspin begins and Dole's policy is hijacked. But their free ride may come to an end on June 11, when Dole steps down. So long as White House responses or policy preemptions relate to Dole the Senate majority leader, they *can* be paid for by the taxpayers as part of the ordinary business of trying to cope with a divided government. But when the trigger is purely political, not legislative, as will be the case upon Sen. Dole's retirement, the taxpayer subsidy should stop.

I know more about this than I would like to because I served as George Bush's counsel during the last presidential reelection effort. Because of our reading of campaign finance and ethics laws in 1991—laws that had tightened considerably since Ronald Reagan's 1984 reelection campaign—we found it necessary to twist the White House staff into pretzels to avoid breaking the law. There is some reason to think the Clintonites may not be as pristine.

The trap for a sitting president running for reelection is that it is illegal to use appropriated funds for purely political purposes. To be sure, it is not hard to cook up an "official" event around which the White House can drape a campaign appearance, so long as the president doesn't make statements about his own reelection. But given the sophistication of modern communications, a president does not have to fly Air Force One to St. Louis or Los Angeles to make news. He can simply talk into a satellite feed to local or regional media and make news, so long as he has something newsworthy to say.

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In either case, though, if the newsworthy commentary is political in nature, it has to be paid for by the campaign. And if it is paid for by the campaign, it cannot be developed inside the White House. Period.

So the public and the media should be asking the following questions:

- Has the White House moved any of the rapid-response operation outside to the campaign? If not, there could be violations of 31 U.S.C. 1301, which limits the use of appropriated funds to those purposes provided by law.

- If, on the other hand, some of the key people have moved over to be paid by the campaign, are they in fact working in the campaign offices, or are they really still camped out in the White House? Even if they are at the campaign, coordinating events with White House staff, the Clintonites could be running into serious problems. They could be violating revolving-door rules, which prohibit former high-level executive-branch staffers from asking anything of their former colleagues for a year's time. This proved a substantial problem for us in the Bush White House: Every time campaign chairman (and former commerce secretary) Robert Mosbacher came into a White House meeting, budget director Richard Darman had to leave—which, fortunately or unfortunately, meant that Mosbacher soon stopped coming to the White House.

But if the outside political types do keep operating out of the White House, they could have an equally serious problem. They could, for example, become "special government employees," the status enjoyed by Travelgate instigator Harry Thomason in 1993, and thus subject to both financial disclosure and the conflict provisions of Section 208 of the Criminal Code (a provision that does *not* apply to Congress, by the way).

- Do the campaign advisers have any outside corporate clients? Maybe Dick Morris advises only other candidates and suspected rapists, but it is very likely the White House will be hearing from Democratic political consultants comparable to Republicans like Charlie Black and Bob Teeter. Both of them gave up

their outside consulting and recused themselves from matters in which they had previous significant involvement. Will the political consultants who work with the Clinton reelection effort do the same?

The Reagan and Bush campaigns tried to manage this tightrope with what we called a “funnel.” The funnel channeled all contacts between the White House and the campaign through the chief of staff’s office, which then reviewed all requests for campaign appearances and speeches for consistency with the president’s program. By minimizing contacts between the campaign and the White House, the funnel ensured the legalities were observed. But this was cumbersome and time-consuming. It led to squabbles and bitterness. And there were limits: We had to have

separate speechwriters, for example, and the opposition-research operation was located exclusively at the campaign.

Managing the tightrope is very difficult. In his recent book, Bush press secretary Marlin Fitzwater placed a considerable amount of blame for our botched 1992 campaign on “my” funnel. And even with those awkward attempts at squaring the circle, we still took many shots from the press for various alleged moral and ethical lapses. This article is intended to ensure that the media pay comparable attention to the Clinton campaign’s observance of the necessary niceties.

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‘JUST A MAN WITH HIS QUOTES’

by Norman Ornstein

BOB DOLE’S DECISION TO LEAVE THE SENATE electrified the nation and impressed pundits everywhere. Soon after Dole’s inspiring farewell speech, a National Journal study showed that American Enterprise Institute scholar Norman Ornstein, holder of the title “King of Quotes” since 1986, had been “dethroned” by Brookings scholar Tom Mann, who had garnered 277 quotes in major newspapers and magazines in the previous year, against 251 for Ornstein. Inspired by Bob Dole’s bold example, Ornstein this week made the following announcement from AEI’s conference room:

Let me say to many of my friends, my wife Judy and my sons Matthew and Danny, and my friends and colleagues standing behind me, we’re very honored to have you here.

And I’d just say, ladies and gentlemen, that one of the qualities of American journalism that distinguish us from other nations is that we judge our pundits not by what they have to say but by how many times they are quoted in newspapers and magazines. You do not lay claim to a title like quotemeister; it lays claim to you. Your obligation is to bring to it the gifts of gab you can and then depart with grace. And my time to leave this think tank has come. I will seek the kingdom of quotes with nothing to fall back on but a guest panelist position on *Face the Nation* or *Nightline*, and nowhere to go but my own talk show or home. (*Cheers, applause.*) Thank you, thank you.

Ten years—ten straight years—I’ve been in the quote race, and ten times journalists have turned to me

in their Rolodexes more than to any other, and I’m proud of that.

So my campaign to recapture the title is not merely about obtaining office. It’s about fundamental things, consequential things, things that are real, like call waiting or one’s own Web site. My campaign is about telling the truth, only more times in more places than anybody else. It’s about doing what is right, like returning Maureen Dowd’s phone calls before deadline. It’s about choosing a King of Quotes who’s not attracted to the glories of the office, but rather to its difficulties. It’s about choosing a King of Quotes who, once he takes office, will keep his perspective, giving no preference in answering messages from the *Washington Post* over the *Omaha World-Herald*, and who will remain by his deepest nature and inclination one of the people’s pundits. Therefore, as the campaign for fiscal 1997’s King of Quotes begins in earnest, it is my obligation to the American Enterprise Institute and to the people of the Newspaper Guild to leave behind all the trappings of the think tank, all comfort and all security.

So today I announce that I will forgo the privileges not only of a resident scholar, but of the think tank itself, from research assistant to on-line services, from which I resign effective on or before June 11. And I will then stand before the press without office or authority, a private citizen, a Minnesotan, just a man with his quotes. But I will be the same man I was when I walked into the room, the same man I was yesterday and the day before, and a long time ago when I was permitted by the grace of God to pontificate about every political subject known to humankind. And I trust in the hard way, for little has come to me except

in the hard way—I have faced quote bans from the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, and I only got access to the Internet this April—which is good because we have a hard task ahead of us.

We are gaining, but still behind in the quotes. The press does not phone our way. And many Beltway pundits confidently dismiss my chances for victory—and get quoted themselves doing so! I do not find this disheartening and I do not find it discouraging, for this is where I touch the ground, and it is in touching the ground in moments of difficulty that I've always found my strength. I have been there before, I have done it the hard way, including without voice mail, and I will do it the hard way once again. (*Cheers, applause.*) Thank you. (*Continued applause.*) Thank you.

For today—(*applause*)—for today I will begin to reconstitute our momentum until it is a great and agile force—clear in direction, irresistible in effect, pithy in observation, terse in sound bite. Our campaign will leave Washington and the *Post* behind to look to America. As summer nears, I will seek the bright light and open spaces of this beautiful country and will ask for the wise counsel of regional reporters and small-town editors, from the seacoast newspapers of Maine and California to the old railroad-town rags in the Midwest to the weeklies in the verdant South, from the *Rocky Mountain News* in Colorado to

the *Southtown Economist* in the 'burbs of Chicago, and in places in between known mainly to you who read *Editor and Publisher*.

I have absolute confidence in the victory that to some may seem unattainable; this is because I have seen victory and I have seen defeat and I know when the phone is about to start ringing and never seems to stop. And to concentrate on the campaign, giving all and risking all, I must leave AEI, which I have loved and which I have been honored to serve—many of my friends, from Ben Wattenberg to Irving Kristol, are here today, as well as regular callers like Helen Dewar of the *Washington Post*, Mike Wines of the *New York Times*, Terry Hunt of the Associated Press, Holly Yeager of Hearst Newspapers, Sharon Schmickle of the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, and dozens of other faithful reporters and editors. And some may find it surprising, given the view that the Beltway has been my life, but that is not so. With all due respect to the Beltway, America has been my life.

I am privileged—(*applause*)—I am highly privileged to be my think tank's quotemeister nominee, and I am content that my fate and my story are for the American press to decide. For the American press corps has always known throughout our long and trying history that God has blessed the

hard way. Thank you, and may God, and Nexis/Lexis, guide us to what is right. ♦



Norman Ornstein

SURVEY SAYS? LITTLE NEW

by Everett Carl Ladd

“NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED” is hardly an exciting political story. Therefore, we in the American public are repeatedly told that things have changed very much indeed.

For the last several months, the prevailing view in political and journalistic circles has been that the pub-

lic, warmly disposed to the Republican revolution on Election Day 1994 and briefly thereafter, has turned dramatically against the GOP. But nothing of the kind has occurred. Though it makes for a less interesting story, it is remarkable how little public sentiment has shifted over the past two years.

This stability of opinion and mood is persuasively demonstrated by the research of pollsters Peter Hart and Robert Teeter, conducted for NBC News and the

Wall Street Journal. In their national survey of May 10-14, Hart and Teeter asked respondents which political party would do a better job on 14 separate issues. The list was a balanced one, ranging from crime, taxes, and foreign policy to welfare, education, and Medicare. At this supposed low point in Republican fortunes, pluralities gave the GOP the edge in nine of the 14 categories. Pluralities said the Democrats would do better only on abortion, education, health care, Medicare, and the environment.

Most striking is a comparison of the current findings to those of mid-October 1994, a mere three weeks before voters sent Republican majorities to both houses of Congress, for the first time in 40 years. Hart and Teeter asked then about 10 of the 14 issues they included in their May 1996 poll. On these, they found no change: Not only did the Republicans lead on 7 of the 10 issues in both October 1994 and May 1996, they did so by virtually identical margins. On "controlling government spending," they gained 15 points; on health care, they lost 8. But on most issues, the difference, if any, was minuscule.

Ample other data, too, contradict the conventional Beltway wisdom that, after a year and a half of Gingrich & Company, the public has swung against the Republicans. For example, Gallup conducted an "opinion referendum" in April that asked respondents how, if "on election day this year you could vote on key issues as well as candidates," they would vote on 26 propositions, including the balanced-budget amendment, school prayer, capital punishment, and the assault-weapons ban. A few of the propositions, such as physician-assisted suicide and "selling off public lands," do not fit naturally on a liberal-conservative continuum, but 20 of the 26 do. And on only five of those 20 did majorities come down on the liberal side: banning assault weapons (57 percent in favor, 42 percent against); reducing defense spending (54 in favor, 42 against); raising the minimum wage (83 in favor, 15 against); reducing social spending (54 against, 42 in favor); and banning all abortions except to save the life of the mother (56 against, 42 in favor). On most of the 15 propositions that the conservative side carried—term limits, a reduction in government agencies, school choice, etc.—it did so overwhelmingly.

But if the country hasn't shifted against Republi-

can policy positions, isn't it nevertheless true that President Clinton is much stronger today than he was before? Actually, no. In the May survey, 52 percent said they approved of Clinton as president. This was NBC/*Wall Street Journal's* 31st asking of that question since Clinton took office, and the responses have remained relatively unchanging, particularly when compared with opinion about previous presidents. Clinton's approval rating ranges from highs of 56 in December 1993 and 60 in January 1994 to lows of 41 in June 1993 and 43 in November 1994. His average approval rating in the 31 surveys is 49, just three points lower than his current number.

It is true that Clinton leads his opponent Bob Dole by (seemingly) large margins in "trial heats." The present margin, according to the May survey, is 17 points (54 to 37); last year, it was only one point in June, two points in July.

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But even here, the conventional wisdom of a big shift to Clinton should be questioned. When the May survey threw in the names of Vice President Al Gore and potential Republican vice-presidential nominee Colin Powell, the Clinton lead dropped to four points—a useful reminder of how soft the numbers are, when a modest plus for the GOP in the vice-presidential slot can trigger a substantial swing. Most vice-presidential possibilities aren't well enough known to have any effect whatsoever.

Consider also 11 surveys, taken from last April to the present, that have posed the Clinton/Gore vs. Dole/Powell question: In the five taken in 1995, Dole and Powell led by an average of three points; in the six taken in 1996, Clinton and Gore have been up by two points—a swing toward Clinton, yes, but far from an earthshaking one.

So GOP partisans and the media alike should relax a bit as they attempt to interpret the campaign polls. The philosophical realignment that has brought the country to a more conservative position seems locked in, and the story of Clinton's popularity remains what it has been throughout his presidency: His numbers are fair to middling and exceptionally stable. And while Dole has yet to make the sale to this year's swing voters—the decisive bloc—he is very much in the running.

Everett Carll Ladd is president of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

THE RECESSION OF 1996

by John Mueller

TO HEAR TELL, THE ECONOMY IS THE MAIN THING Bill Clinton has going for him in his reelection bid. The unemployment rate was down to 5.6 percent in May, falling from 7.3 percent in November 1992. And the latest numbers suggest the economy grew at an annual rate of 2.3 percent in the first quarter of the year.

Nevertheless I think we will be in a recession by Election Day. The pattern is uncannily similar to 1990, when the last recession began. Unemployment fell to 5.1 percent in June 1990, and real growth in the first quarter of that year was a sharp 4.2 percent. But by July we were in recession—and that was before, not after, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

The reason the same outcome is likely later this year has to do with the way the economy interacts with Federal Reserve policy. Conventional wisdom (including conventional wisdom at the Fed) has it that monetary policy affects the economy fairly rapidly: Alan Greenspan and company act to raise or lower interest rates, and six to nine months later the economy slows or accelerates. Or so the theory goes.

But the facts reveal a different story. The central bank's interest-rate policy *does* affect the business cycle, but it takes much longer than two or three quarters—in fact, it takes a full two years. The bottom of the last recession in the first quarter of 1991 corresponded to the peak of short-term interest rates in the first quarter of 1989. Likewise, the spurts of growth at the end of 1992 and the end of 1993 corresponded to sharp cuts in the Federal Funds rate at the end of 1990 and again at the end of 1991. In fact, business-cycle fluctuations seem to be dominated by the Federal Reserve's policy on short-term interest rates, once you take account of the two-year lag.

So what was the Fed up to two years ago? Raising interest rates—the Federal Funds rate went up sharply after April 1994. What this suggests is that, after the strong first quarter of this year, growth will slow and then output will decline over the last half of the year. Industrial capacity use and manufacturing employment have been falling for over a year now (as they did before the last recession). And the effects of the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes in the latter part of 1994 have still not been felt by the real economy. If the two-year lag between Fed actions and economic results holds up—as it consistently has in recent decades—the decline in output should be concentrated in the second half of this year, and the economy will hit bottom in the first part of 1997.

Could fast action by the Federal Reserve in cutting interest rates head off the downturn? Probably not. If, as I expect, the economy weakens at about mid-year, the Fed will most likely

respond by cutting its interest rate target. But that will actually accelerate the decline at first. When interest rates are falling, every sensible business executive or householder tries to put off investments as long as possible, in hopes the rates will fall even more. That's one reason why the recovery seemed agonizingly slow in 1991 and 1992; people were waiting for the Fed to stop cutting interest rates. It's only when rates bottom out and start to tick up that everyone gets off the dime and rushes to lock in the new investments that have been made more attractive by lower interest rates.

When Alan Greenspan testified before Congress in early 1994, after the Fed had started raising interest rates, many members of Congress complained that the action would slow the economy before the 1994 congressional elections. At the same time, White House staff expressed relief that the slowdown would be over before the 1996 election cycle. In fact, the opposite happened: There was a surge in investments, and economic growth, in 1994. Not only was it too soon for the rate hikes to slow down growth; the rise triggered one last surge of investment financing.

What effect would a recession later this year have on Clinton's chances? Not necessarily as much as you would imagine. A personal rule of thumb is that perceptions about the economy—not only among the public, but also among forecasters—take about a year to catch up with reality. Businesses and families tend to compare their situations with the same time a year earlier. So the economy will have turned up or down for some time before any change is noticed.

On Election Day 1992, most people were convinced that we were still in a recession, even though the economy had been recovering for more than a year. If a third-quarter drop in output is reported before Election Day 1996, it may be similarly dismissed as an aberration, unless people are more attuned to bad news this year. In general, though, there is one thing worse than a recession in an election year: a recession that begins the year before an election. People have more time to think about the bad news.

To forecast a recession starting in the second half of 1996 defies what everyone "knows" about the economy. Of course in 1990 everyone "knew" that the Fed was pulling off a "soft landing." Instead, we got a recession. The odds are that we will again.

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PEDOPHILIA CHIC

By Mary Eberstadt

When most Americans hear the word “pedophile,” they usually think of men like the self-described “child-molesting demon”

Larry Don McQuay, who was released from a prison in East Texas in April and driven to San Antonio to begin a closely supervised, but nonetheless semi-free, new life. And when most Americans think of men like McQuay roaming the streets, they react much as did the outraged, screaming-in-the-streets, placard-carrying citizens of San Antonio. About the mildest thing said by one of them was “I sure hope there will be more indictments” to send McQuay back to jail—this, from the chairman of the state Board of Pardons and Paroles, under whose auspices McQuay was released. The local victims-rights groups were less restrained. As the president of one such group put it, in a straddle between threat and hope, “In this city, he’s not going to be safe”—thus summarizing neatly the vigilante desire that most parents, when contemplating a figure like McQuay, would doubtless second.

In addition to a spate of high-profile cases like McQuay’s, the past few years have also witnessed an ongoing public obsession with child abuse in any form; a Congress that, at the urging of the White House and Justice Department, has toughened the penalties for child-pornography trafficking; and Bill Clinton’s signing of the constitutionally complicated

Megan’s Law, which makes it impossible for those once convicted of child-sex offenses to move anonymously into an unsuspecting neighborhood.

And yet a funny thing happened on the way to today’s intense fear and loathing of Chester the Molester. For even as citizens around the country have sought new ways of keeping the McQuays of the world cordoned off from the rest of us, and even as the public rhetoric about protecting America’s children has reached deafening levels, a number of enlightened voices have been raised in defense of giving pedophilia itself a second look.

After all—or so some of these voices have suggested—what if pedophilia is in fact a victimless crime? What if teenagers, and even children, are more in control of their emotions, their bodies, their sexuality, than the rest of us think? What if sexual relations with adults are actually “empowering” to the young? What if pedophiles and would-be pedophiles are in fact victims themselves—exploited by the cunning young people they befriend?

There are also the matters of civil liberty. Is it fair to send people to jail for owning, trading, and obsessively consuming child pornography when no one is really injured by such practices? And what about the notion of an “age of consent”—isn’t it an anachronism, in this age of adolescent sexual precocity? Shouldn’t it be lowered to a more realistic standard? Say, to fourteen? Thirteen? Twelve?



Illustrations by Neil Shigley

Mary Eberstadt is adjunct fellow at the Hudson Institute.

Once upon a time, the reader losing sleep over questions like these would have had to travel to Times Square, or the local porn shop, or perhaps the nearest branch of the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). But no longer. Now he need only subscribe to the right stylish magazines, the right cutting-edge publishers, and be familiar with the work of the right celebrated authors. It is hard to know what to make of these piecemeal attempts—which amount to nothing so elevated as a movement—to rewrite what most of the rest of us persist in thinking about adults whose sexual interests run to kids. Call it the last gasp of a nihilism that has exhausted itself by chasing down every other avenue of liberation, only to find one last roadblock still manned by the bourgeoisie. Call it pedophilia chic.

Calvin Klein's Leather Daddy

For laymen, the best-known example of this phenomenon was last summer's much-reviled and ultimately abandoned ad campaign for Calvin Klein jeans. In fact, as the record will show, when measured against other recent soundings on the subject of adult-child sex, that ad campaign itself appears—pun intended—mere child's play. But first, a review of the facts.

Just about a year ago, the company launched a series of print and television ads that were, according to almost every critic who reviewed them, bizarrely and upsettingly reminiscent of child pornography. Even for a public made blasé by exposure to Calvin Klein's many other provocative images, the seediness of this latest effort proved just too much. There were, first, the images themselves: teenage models—most looking bored, with legs spread apart and underwear revealed—lounging around semi-dressed. There was also the matter of setting. The cheap wood paneling and shag carpets were supposed to suggest a suburban rec room—another visual convention, it seems, of the child-porn genre.

By common consent, the scripts for the TV ads—which ran only in New York before being withdrawn—were even more compelling evidence of the campaign's indebtedness to the pornographic canon. In those ads, an offstage male voice seemed to goad the young models into responding through a combination of wiles and special pleading. “You take direction well—do you like to take direction?” the voice asked a girl. The lines to boys were smuttier still. “You got a

real nice look. How old are you? Are you strong? You think you could rip that shirt off of you? That's a real nice body. You work out? I can tell.” And so on.

Though girls and boys alike appeared in the ads, it was clear to any savvy viewer that the boys, rather than the girls, were the main event. For one thing, there was nothing really new about the girls. As a critic for *Adweek* remarked at the time, “Girls have been objectified forever. It's not shocking, sad to say.” (It is particularly unshocking in a Calvin Klein jeans campaign; after all, it is now fifteen years since an underage Brooke Shields was used to suggestive effect.)

No, what was new in this latest effort was the question of who those boys were posing for. As James Kaplan noted acidly in *New York* magazine, “What

especially got to many people was the images of the boys, scrawny and white-chested, posing like pin-ups, their cK Calvin Klein jeans partially undone. . . . That was *really* groundbreaking advertising.”

The talent, too, was cutting edge. The ad campaign was shot by the well-known photographer Steven Meisel (who is credited, among other work, with the photos in Madonna's *Sex* book). Meisel in turn made another personnel choice

of celebrity interest. As the *Washington Post* reported later in September:

When President Clinton railed against those notorious Calvin Klein ads . . . he probably didn't know that the off-camera voice in the television versions belonged to a gentleman named Lou Maletta—aka the Leather Daddy. Since Calvin Klein proclaimed loudly in his defense that there was no pornographic intent to the ads, Maletta was certainly an interesting casting choice. . . .

Maletta, 58, is founder and president of the New York-based Gay Cable Network, which produces “Gay USA,” a news show; “In the Dungeon,” “about the New York leather scene”; and “Men & Films,” which features excerpts from gay porn videos, and for which Maletta's Leather Daddy character was created.

The next day, the *Post* was forced to publish a correction: At the last minute, and for reasons unclear, Klein himself decided to replace “Leather Daddy” with a professional voice-over actor. Interesting though that decision may be—at the very least, it does seem to imply an awareness on *someone's* part that there was such a thing as going too far—it is not nearly as significant a choice as that of commissioning Maletta in the first place. What *that* choice signified was what any sophisticated viewer would already have discerned—that the ads had an obvious man-boy sexual subtext.

The second interesting fact about the outcome of the Klein affair was the inadvertently revealing rationale put forth by company officials. The main idea seemed to be that teenagers are more sexually sophisticated than many adults want to believe. "The message of the cK Calvin Klein jeans current advertising campaign," as a full-page ad in the *New York Times* and elsewhere informed the public, was that "young people today, the most media savvy generation yet, have a real strength of character and independence. They have very strongly defined lines of what they will and will not do . . ." It was this very strength, officials reiterated, that proved discomfiting to the public at large. "The world," as Klein himself told an interviewer shortly after the ads were pulled, "is seeing a reflection of what's really going on."

In a sense, Calvin Klein got it exactly right. All that groundbreaking advertising was indeed reflecting something real, albeit something very different from what the ex-post-facto explanations claimed. What those ads did mirror was something else: the idea that non-adults (particularly if they are boys) are appropriate sex objects for adults (particularly if they are men).

Contrary to what some critics implied at the time, Calvin Klein and his team did not invent the idea of using man-boy sex to grab public attention; they merely submitted it to a commercial plebiscite. Middle America, to the surprise of the fashion moguls, voted the campaign down. But Middle America has only been one testing ground for revisionist suggestions about pedophilia. Other, more sophisticated venues have proved more willing to give the subject a second look.

A Step in the Right Direction'

Consider an example from the *New York Times*, which, in an eerie conjunction, appeared within weeks of the Calvin Klein ad blitz. At the time, as

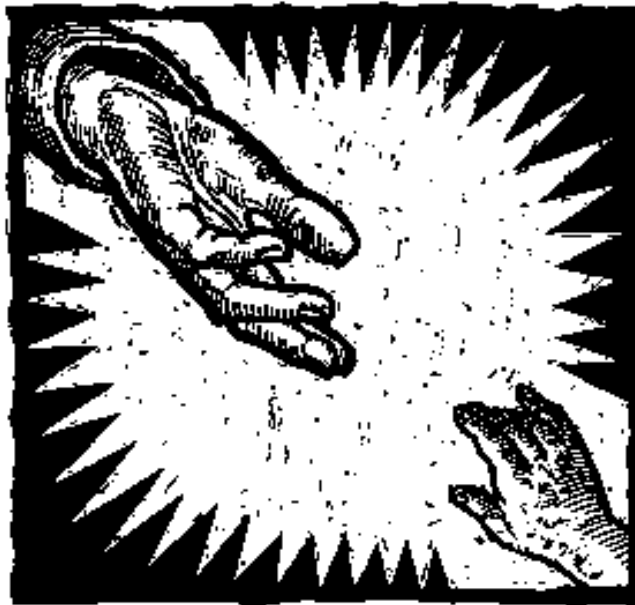
readers may recall, the public fear of pedophile predators was being fanned by the discovery of yet another form of outreach: the home computer. In the preceding months, one 16-year-old boy had run away with bus tickets provided by a chat-line "friend"; similar cases of solicitation had become the subjects of FBI investigations; and Congress, heavily pressured by interest groups, had turned its hand to devising legislation that would prevent the exploitation of minors via cyberspace. All in all, it seemed an unlikely moment to suggest that those selfsame chat rooms and bulletin boards had their bright side. But that is exactly what the *Times* managed to do in a front-page report

by Trip Gabriel called "Some On-Line Discoveries Give Gay Youths a Path to Themselves."

Though "a handful of high-profile cases" had "dramatized the threat of on-line predators," wrote Gabriel, kids themselves shared no such fears of the screen. In fact, "all the young users interviewed" for the *Times* piece "said the threat was exaggerated, adding that they would not be likely to meet blindly with an on-line acquaintance." In fact, if the kids had any fear at all, it seemed to be

quite the opposite—that their lines of communication would be shut down by party-pooping parents and legislators. Recent legislation, in particular, this reporter discovered, "has made some gay youths fearful about the future of on-line discussions."

And fearful they should be, if cyberspace is really the lifeline the *Times* made it out to be. A "distracted youth" in California was "on the verge of suicide" until reaching one "Daniel Cox, 19, a regular on an Internet chat channel dedicated to gay teenagers" at 3 a.m. Cox ministered to the California youth, and the next day "the young man was back on line and doing O.K., *Mr. Cox said* [emphasis added]." This apparently happens all the time. As another of these selfless do-gooders put it—one Michael Handler, "17, a moderator of the Usenet news group for gay youth"—"We want everybody to be who they are and be happy and



not kill themselves because they feel they're some sort of abomination."

Another teenager, Ryan Matsuno, "typed out a complaint of loneliness" one night, only to receive "more than 100 supportive E-mail letters" within the next few days—letters that "gave me courage" and "the initiative to go through with telling my mother," according to Master Matsuno. Still another teenager, we are told, used his computer skills to outwit that rarest of things in cyberspace, an actual predator: "Dan Martin, a gay 17-year-old in Fresno, Calif., said he talked for a year on line to a man claiming to be 21. Occasionally the conversation turned to sex. When Mr. Martin suggested a meeting, the man refused and confirmed Mr. Martin's suspicions that he was really middle-aged. 'After I confronted him, I never heard from him again,' Mr. Martin said."

In sum, according to Gabriel, "sites for gay and lesbian youth are the source of some of the most stirring stories in cyberspace."

These touching dramas, the *Times* report continued, are social-worker approved—certainly by one Frances Kunreuther, director of "a social service agency for gay teenagers in Manhattan," who says, "I think the Internet is a step in the right direction." At the same time, though, the social workers also "cautioned that cyberspace could not substitute for face-to-face contacts." But wait: Aren't face-to-face contacts exactly what most people *fear* when they think of kids in sex-saturated "chat rooms"? Well, no matter. And no matter too, apparently, that anyone logging on as a teenager could be 17, or 70—or 7. The only thing that matters, or so it appears from reporter Gabriel, is that "the electronic curtain is not a closet"—this, from one Reid Fishler, founder of an Internet site called the "Youth Assistance Organization," who is said to be 19.

A Danger to His Students, or Only to Himself?

Another place willing to ask some hard-nosed questions about grownups who are sexually interested in kids is *Vanity Fair* magazine. For the most part, its glossy pages seem an unlikely territory on which to argue in earnest about anything—much less about anything as obscure as whether a high school teacher obsessed with child pornography was in fact a misunderstood victim himself. Nonetheless, it was in a 1992 issue of *Vanity Fair* that veteran reporter Jesse Korn-

bluth published what is probably the most heartfelt and sympathetic portrayal of a convicted child-pornography trafficker yet to appear in expensive print.

"Exeter's Passion Play," as the piece was called, concerned the fate of Larry Lane (or "Lane") Bateman, a tenured teacher at the elite Phillips Exeter Academy who was convicted in October 1992 of possessing and transporting child pornography. The preceding summer, a police raid on his apartment had turned up 33 videotapes of child pornography. The police also found hundreds of pornographic tapes featuring adults—that is to say, men—and still other tapes made by Exeter students on assignment from Bateman that their teacher had spliced and doctored to his liking (for example, zeroing in on genital areas). Finally, the police also found sophisticated videotaping equipment, some of which belonged to Exeter, later valued at between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

As Bateman would later admit to the authorities, he had been involved with child pornography for twenty years—buying it, lending it, going out of his way to get it, and above all, viewing it obsessively. Moreover, at least some of the people in his life were aware that he was deeply involved in pornography of some sort; the *Vanity Fair* piece itself cites at least two. But the question of who knew what,

and when, was mostly irrelevant to Bateman's criminal trial, which centered on four specific counts relating to child pornography. That case rested largely on a single witness named Michael Caven (born Michael Pappas), a one-time student of Bateman's from a high school on Long Island who had now turned chief accuser and informant.

Bateman denied Caven's most damning charges—that he had molested Caven from the age of 16, and that he had taken pornographic pictures of him as a legal minor. But what Bateman could not deny was that in the course of 1990 alone he had sent or given Caven more than 100 pornographic video tapes, and that at least some of these tapes were child pornography. Bateman, for his part, never denied having given Caven child pornography; he only denied having sent those particular tapes through the mail. ("I'm not totally stupid," he explained at his trial.)

And there was more. According to a pre-sentencing memorandum submitted by the U.S. Attorney's office, boys at Exeter had been filmed in the showers

NOT EVERYONE PRIZES HOBBIES LIKE THESE IN A BOARDING SCHOOL TEACHER, WITH OR WITHOUT THAT LIBRARY OF KIDDIE PORN ON THE SIDE.

and bedrooms without their knowledge, thanks to one of Bateman's hidden cameras. "The boys," the memo noted, "are either wearing undershorts, towels or nothing." Also in the memo, according to the *New York Times*, was the fact that Bateman spliced pieces of the students' tapes into pornographic films. "Mr. Bateman," the *Times* reported, "duplicated tapes made by about 20 students for class onto a master tape, giving each segment a name like 'Blonde Zen Lad' and 'Belt Spanked.'"

Surreptitious filming of students, pornographic tape-making, pornographic tape-editing, pornographic tape-swapping with a former student, pornographic reconstruction of homework videos: Not everyone prizes hobbies like these in a boarding school teacher, with or without that library of kiddie porn on the side. Certainly that was the view adopted at last by Exeter itself, which fired Bateman within 24 hours of his arrest. Something of that view seems also to have been shared by federal district court judge Jose A. Fuste, who in January 1993 sentenced Bateman to five years in prison without parole for one count of possession and two counts of interstate shipment of child pornography—a sentence that, though hardly the maximum allowed by law, was a far cry from leniency.

(Under a fourth count, forfeiture, Bateman was also forced to surrender his video equipment.) There was also the influential fact that Bateman showed no remorse whatever for his behavior. As a report in the *New York Times* put it when the sentence was announced: "He said he still did not understand what was 'so wrong' about what he had done. 'If I strangled a child, if somebody had been hurt, if somebody's property had been destroyed, then there certainly would be a victim,' Mr. Bateman said. 'Where are the victims?'"

Where, indeed? It is that question that reporter Jesse Kornbluth sets out to answer, and the way he answers it will likely take some readers by surprise. For the chief victim of the Bateman affair, as it turns

out, was not, say, Michael Caven, or the Exeter students filmed in the showers, or even all those little boys who were somehow made to perform in all those movies with titles like *Ballin' Boys Duo*, *Young Mouthful*, and *Now, Boys!* No, the chief victim of it all—perhaps even the only victim, if the story told in *Vanity Fair* is correct—appears to have been Bateman himself.

In the first place, or so at least Kornbluth's essay makes clear, Bateman was a victim of his accuser, Michael Caven (alias Pappas). Caven, the reporter tells us, was a hustler, an alcoholic, a druggie. He exploited rich, older men (including, we are told, Frank Caven, the successful owner of several gay bars who legally adopted his young sex partner in a moment of drunken inspiration).

In fact, throughout Kornbluth's essay, not a kind or empathetic word appears for the man who claimed to have been abused by Bateman as a teenager. But there are, interestingly enough, many, many words from the Pappas/Caven detractors, and Caven is described by a former colleague in the bar business as "a jerk and an egotist. He was media crazy . . . he loved to get his face in any rag in town." Bateman's friends, he reports, "loathe"

Michael Caven. "If he wanted to do Lane a favor, he could have said, 'Get help,'" one snaps. "Lane doesn't deserve to have his life ruined."

Second, or so it appears on this telling, Bateman was the victim of the "brutality" and "frosty environment" of Exeter itself. (This turn looks ironic, for under Kendra O'Donnell, who was appointed principal in 1987, the school would seem to have entered a progressive warming phase; it was under O'Donnell, for example, that Exeter—which now boasts a Gay/Straight Alliance—invited gay alumni to come and speak to the students about their sexuality.) Surely Bateman's firing was hypocritical; after all, we are talking about Exonians, who in Kornbluth's telling at least are a worldly-wise and sexually sophisticated bunch.



"The idea that single male teachers might be homosexual and appreciate young men," he writes of these preppies, "would not be a soul-shattering revelation to Exeter students."

And, of course, the hapless Bateman was also a victim of a society that forces homosexuals to act furtively. When faced with the conservatism of Exeter, where "only one instructor has come out," Lane Bateman stayed in the closet. And it was all that time in the closet, it is argued here, that led to his taste for child pornography. "It's not healthy to be so secretive, but Lane never felt secure enough at Exeter to come out," explains a friend who has long known of Bateman's interest in pornography. . . . 'He's heavy into fantasy. These sex movies are the legacy of the closet.'"

In case the reader misses the point, Bateman is also provided an opportunity to expound on it himself.

Bateman says he purchased the material that ultimately brought him down several years before he started teaching at Exeter, when he was coming out of the closet and wanted to make up for lost time. "For a few years, you could buy anything, and I bought some films and books that featured young boys," he says. "For me, these pictures were aesthetic, not pornographic. I know people say, these images are despicable—how can you think that? But the key point is that I identified with the boys, not the men. If someone young had grabbed me when I was that age and said, 'Let me teach you something,' I would have said, 'Sure.'"

And here, as with the example of Calvin Klein, we come to the real heart of pedophilia chic: It's about boys. It is boys and boys alone who are seen as fair sexual game. For if Bateman's cache of child pornography had featured little girls, rather than little boys, it is unthinkable that he would have become the object of a sympathetic profile in the likes of *Vanity Fair*. That a teacher whose sexual tastes run to boys rather than girls could come to command a cultural dispensation for that preference—this, rather than the "legacy of the closet," would seem to be the "deeper meaning" of the scandal at Exeter.

Biased though it was in favor of Lane Bateman, and much as it seemed to suggest that child pornography may be a victimless crime, the *Vanity Fair* piece at least stopped short of endorsing either child pornography or pedophilia per se. It is an amazing fact that these omissions would come to seem positively retrograde in light of an essay appearing two and half years later in yet another stylish, widely circulated magazine, the *New Republic*.

A Good Word for NAMBLA

The most overt attempt by a hip journal to give pedophiles a place at the table came in the form of a May 8, 1995, "Washington Diarist" in the *New Republic* by Hanna Rosin entitled "Chickenhawk." Ostensibly inspired by a "riveting" documentary of the same name about the North American Man-Boy Love Association, "Chickenhawk" opens with the following quote from the film's star, a real-life pedophile named Leyland Stevenson: "He's just like a flower in bloom. He's at that perfect stage, in which he is hermaphroditic. . . . He's in that wonderful limbo between being a child and an adolescent—he's certainly an adolescent, but he has that weird feminine grace about him."

Stevenson, of course, is talking about a little boy. It is a quote intended to jolt the reader, and no doubt for most readers it still does. Having already invited the reader to imagine a child as seen through the eyes of a pedophile, Rosin then proceeds to something more avant-garde still: a chatty review of man-boy love and of the North American Man-Boy Love Association (whose informal motto, as some readers may know, is "Eight is too late").

"*Chickenhawk*," the author explains, "is worth seeing" because it "succeeds, at least partially, in making monsters human." Though

it may be true that Leyland Stevenson is "every mother's worst nightmare," it is also true—at least true according to Hanna Rosin—that Stevenson and his fellow NAMBLA members have gotten an unnecessarily bad rap. "There are no steamy orgies" in the documentary, she notes dryly, "or bound-up boys languishing in NAMBLA's basement." NAMBLA itself, she casually explains, "functions mainly as a support group for fantasizers, with the requisite forums for victim-bonding." Like members of any other group united by common interests, its rank and file have their humdrum clubby moments; they hold roundtables (where they "hug and share persecution stories"), solicit subscriptions, exchange "bulletins." Not only are these activities benign, it seems, but their propriety is enforced by the club itself. "Group policy," we are assured, "strictly forbids contact with live boys or even illicit pictures on the premises."

Next, Rosin praises NAMBLA's "bravery." "After all," she writes, "it is still heresy even to consider the possibility of the legitimacy of their feelings." Today's

THE MOST OVERT ATTEMPT BY A HIP JOURNAL TO GIVE PEDOPHILES A PLACE AT THE TABLE CAME IN THE MAY 8, 1995, *NEW REPUBLIC*.

pedophiles, she reminds us, live in especially unfriendly times. Politically, things could hardly be worse; witness the tough language on child pornography in the Contract with America. Even President Clinton, she notes sarcastically, “was cowed into taking a courageous stand against ‘softness on child pornography.’” Yet NAMBLA, despite it all, continues pluckily on: “keeping all their activities above board”—even publishing their New York phone number.

Just as the grownups of NAMBLA turn out to be more innocent than one might expect, the boys, for their part, seem to be far more sophisticated. As Rosin reasons, “it might even be that a budding young stud had the upper hand over the aging, overweight loner.” And how old does a boy have to be, in the Rosin/NAMBLA view, to qualify for “budding young stud” status? Sixteen? Fourteen? Twelve? No? Well, how about ten?

One NAMBLA member in his 20s, an enticing blond with slits for blue eyes, describes a sexual experience he had with a karate instructor when he was 10. “I came on to him. I knew what I was doing. I felt very empowered. I felt I controlled the relationship, which is a good thing for a kid. It dispels the belief that adults are always in power in such relationships. You know, I led him around. I was the one in power.”



Well, boys just want to have fun—or, as the *New Republic* seems to have it, *just* boys want to have fun. It is “plausible,” Rosin muses, that “a teenage boy [emphasis added] might agree to sex with an older man.” Similarly, though she notes approvingly that, for example, the age of consent in the Netherlands is twelve, she nowhere advocates changing the age-of-consent laws for girls. And she certainly shies away from suggesting that the figure of the “budding young stud” might be interchangeable with that of a “budding young slut”—a phrase whose appearance would surely have incurred the wrath of a good many *New Republic* readers. “Chickenhawk” itself, interestingly enough, passed almost without comment from those same subscribers.

‘Kids Want to Please You’

Actually, these latest attempts to manage a good word for pedophilia are not quite as *au courant* as they first appear. Similar themes have been floated for years by a number of self-described, self-consciously gay writers—and not only by those on the cultural fringe, but by several who have crossed over to the mainstream literary market.

Perhaps the most prominent of these writers is the acclaimed novelist and essayist Edmund White. The author of a number of enthusiastically received novels—*Forgetting Elena*, *A Boy’s Own Story*, and *The Beautiful Room Is Empty*—White has also had a brilliant career as an editor and essayist. He has worked at

Saturday Review and *Horizon*, been a contributing editor to *Vogue* and *House and Garden*, and written for publications ranging from the *New York Times Magazine* to *Christopher Street*. In 1980, a number of his pieces reflecting on post-liberation gay life were collected into yet another critically acclaimed book called *States of Desire: Travels in Gay America*.

On account of its historical timing alone—the book amounts to a city-by-city celebration of gay life published on the very eve of the identification of AIDS—

States of Desire remains a fascinating and retrospectively poignant sociological document. But it is a work that deserves to be remembered for something else as well: It is probably the most critically acclaimed piece of reportage in which the taboo against pedophilia has been examined at considerable length and judged archaic—a judgment that moreover passed virtually without comment from White’s admiring critics. Throughout most of this reflection, White studiously keeps to an Olympian “on the one hand this, on the other hand that” rhetorical monologue—in which one hand, as in most such monologues, consistently manages to get the better of the other.

Pedophilia, White asserts at the outset of this discussion, is “the most controversial issue” in the lives of

many in the gay movement. It is also, the reader is led to understand, a terribly complicated subject. As one gay man—ostensibly not himself a pedophile—puts it in words that the author quotes approvingly, “There’s no way to answer it [the issue of pedophilia] without exploring it. We need information and time for deliberation. There are no clear answers—who would provide them?”

White is willing to try. “Those who oppose pedophilia,” he posits, “argue that the ‘consent’ or seeming cooperation of an eight-year-old is meaningless.” On the other hand, “those who defend pedophilia reply that children are capable, from infancy on, of showing reluctance.” Similarly, “critics of pedophilia contend that children are easily manipulated by adults—through threats, through actual force, through verbal coercion, through money.” Here again, the other side is allowed the last—and longest—word:

Champions of pedophilia (and many other people) argue that children are already exploited by adults in our society—they are bullied by their parents, kept in financial and legal subjugation, frequently battered. And they have little legal recourse in attempting to escape punitive adults. . . . They can’t vote, they can’t drink, they can’t run away, they can’t enter certain movie theaters, they can’t refuse to go to school, they can’t disobey curfew laws—and they can’t determine their own sexual needs and preferences. Pedophiles find it ironic that our society should be so worked up over the issue of sexual exploitation of children and so unconcerned with all other (and possibly more damaging) forms of exploitation. *If anything, the pedophiles argue, sex may be the one way in which children can win serious consideration from adults and function with them on an equal plane; if a child is your lover, you will treat him with respect.* [emphasis added]

And where does our narrator locate himself between these camps? “I am not in the business of recommending guidelines for sex with youngsters,” he writes coyly, for “I simply haven’t gathered enough information about the various issues involved.” At the same time, though—or so the author insists—“the question of sex with children remains”; and White makes a final attempt to get to the bottom of it by interviewing an actual pedophile in a bar in Boston.

This man, the author coolly reports, “has a lover of twelve (he met him when the boy was six).” Far from the voracious predator so feared by the general public, however, our pedophile could scarcely appear more ethereal. He is “thirty-six, dressed in faded denims, his face as innocent and mournful as Petrouchka’s. His voice was breathy and light, his manner anxious and

almost humble.” Lest there be any last doubt of this man’s suitability for polite company, White erases it with the ultimate compliment. “I was,” he writes candidly, “strongly attracted to him.”

There follows a conversation in which the amorous adventures of White’s pedophile are fondly recounted. White asks how the man met his present “lover,” and the pedophile replies: “At the beach. He was there with his mother. He came over to me and started talking. You see, the kids must make all the moves.” In case that point has been missed, White reiterates it a few lines later, this time asking explicitly: “Did your friend take the sexual initiative with you?” “Absolutely,” Petrouchka affirms, adding, “I’ve been into kids since I was twenty-two, and in every case the kids were the aggressors.”

“What do you two do in bed?” White next inquires. There follows a graphic description, which the pedophile concludes on a mournful note. For there is, as it turns out here, at least one problem with man-boy love that most readers may not have anticipated: namely, that the kids are *too* loving. “My last lover,” the pedophile explains, “told me that he didn’t like getting f---d. ‘Why didn’t you *tell* me?’ I asked. ‘Because you liked it so much—I wanted to please you.’ That’s the problem; kids want to please you.”

A second writer who has explicitly addressed the matter of men and boys, this time adolescents, is Larry Kramer, author of the hugely celebrated AIDS play *The Normal Heart* and of an earlier novel called *Faggots* (1978), one of the classics of the post-liberation gay genre. The comparison between Kramer and White is particularly useful insofar as the two authors differ markedly in a number of important ways. Kramer’s authorial perspective, as well as his political persona (he is a well-known activist and co-founder of the New York Gay Men’s Health Crisis), have made him something of an anomaly in his chosen circles. Between the 1970s and the dawn of AIDS, at a time when most gay figures were proclaiming the joys of post-Stonewall “liberation,” Kramer, for his part, was nearly alone in emphasizing its dark side. *Faggots*, for example—a controversial book then and now—concerns the plight of a man looking for homosexual love in the hedonistic heyday of Manhattan and Fire Island. Kramer includes a number of scenes in which older men drug, flatter, and seduce teenage boys. Most prominent among these is a 16-year-old named Timmy, who is

WHITE ASKS HOW THE MAN MET HIS PRESENT LOVER, AND THE PEDOPHILE REPLIES: “AT THE BEACH. HE WAS THERE WITH HIS MOTHER.”

initiated into the high life at a party by a series of experienced men and finally “devoured” by ten at one time. In the course of this brutal description—one of several in the book involving adolescent boys—Kramer repeatedly invokes the appeal of Timmy’s “beauty,” his “teenage skin,” his status as “forbidden fruit.” One by one, the men at the party succumb to Timmy’s charms, including even the most macho of them all (“the Winston Man”), who finds himself “excited in a way that he has not been since” high school.

Timmy’s fate in the course of the book, it should be added, is not a happy one. Is Kramer implying that such is the price paid for decadence, or is there tacit empathy in his depictions of Timmy’s many would-be “fathers”? It is left to the reader to guess. Much less ambiguous, at any rate, is the role played by Timmy and other “youngsters” in the world that *Faggots* portrays.

Another celebrated gay author who broached the subject of sex with minors is the late Paul Monette. Monette’s 1988 book *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* garnered a National Book Critics Circle Award nomination and was acclaimed by many as “one of the most eloquent works to come out of the AIDS epidemic” (*USA Today*). His 1992 book *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story* won the National Book Award. It is in this volume that Monette, like Edmund White before him, puts forth what would once have been a controversial thesis about the sexual wants of prepubescent boys. “Nine is not too young to feel the tribal call,” he notes early on while recollecting his own childhood adventures with a boy his age. “Nine and a half is old enough,” he repeats later, adding the by-now familiar note that “for me at least, it was a victory of innocence over a world of oppression.”

Several chapters later, while reminiscing about an aborted affair he had with a high-school student while teaching at a boarding school, Monette sounds another theme that once would have been guaranteed to shock:

that of the predatory, empowered adolescent. “Behind the gritted teeth of passion,” writes the author of his first sexual encounter with a particular boy, “I heard the ripple of laughter, so one of us must have been having fun. Must’ve been Greg, for I was too busy feeding on sin and death to play.”

“It was Greg who always chose the time,” he continues, adding dramatically, “I stood ready to drop whatever I was doing. . . . I lived in thrall to Greg’s unpredictable needs.”

That is not to say that Monette, at the time, felt himself relieved of responsibility for the affair—far from it. “If I am particular about the fact of being

seduced—putting it all on him, the will and the dare and then the control—it doesn’t mean I didn’t feel the guilt. . . . I had become the thing the heteros secretly believe about everyone gay—a predator, a recruiter, an indoctrinator of boys into acts of darkness.” But this self-recrimination, he goes on to reveal, was simply false consciousness. For finally, “I don’t think that now. Twenty years of listening to gay men recount their own adolescent seductions of older guys has put it all in a different light.”

Have all these trial balloons just passed without comment over the public head? One of the few critics to have taken notice is Bruce Bawer, who in his 1993 book *A Place at the Table* castigates Edmund White in particular for his advocacy of man-boy sex. Such radicalism, Bawer argues, is part of the twisted legacy of the closet—a legacy that has forced “subculture” writers like White to evermore in-your-face positions on account of their oppression by the rest of society.

But writers have from time immemorial endured oppression—including jail time and execution—without leaping to the defense of pedophilia. And what kind of “oppression” is it, exactly, that confers fame, fortune, critical raves, national awards, and—in the case of Edmund White—a Guggenheim fellowship and anointment as a *Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres*?



Actually, even the likes of White were being more derivative than they would ever like to believe. Hands down, if you'll pardon the expression, the real big daddy of pedophilia chic could only be the long-dead Alfred C. Kinsey. As Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel point out in their 1990 exposé *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, "It is Kinsey's work which established the notion of 'normal' childhood sexual desire"—a notion that, as their book documents, was field-tested on the bodies of hundreds of children, most of them boys, in ways that might today be considered imprisonable offenses.

How did Kinsey and his team get away with it? "As we can see now," wrote Tom Bethell in his excellent review of the Kinsey facts for the May 1996 *American Spectator*, "science had vast prestige at the time and Kinsey exploited it. Any perversion could be concealed beneath the scientist's smock and the posture of detached observation."

Yet if Kinsey is now suffering a public disrobing, his intellectual heirs display their researches still. For a final model of pedophilia chic—this one tricked out with all the requisite charts, tables, models, and talk of methodology—consider a volume published in 1993 by Prometheus Books. As its name seems to suggest, Prometheus is a publishing house of cutting-edge aspiration, whose backlist reveals its focus on issues like paranormal psychology, freethinking, and humanism. And, oh yes, a trans-Atlantic exploration of the virtues of pederasty called *Children's Sexual Encounters with Adults: A Scientific Study*, by a trio identified as C.K. Li ("a clinical psychologist in Paisley, Scotland"), D.J. West ("Emeritus Professor of Clinical Criminology at Cambridge University"), and T.P. Woodhouse ("a criminological research worker in Ealing, England").

Like our other pioneering looks at sex with kiddies, *Children's Sexual Encounters with Adults* is sexually biased, concentrating as it does on the "startling contrast" between boys and girls when it comes to sex with grownups. ("Surveys," as the authors explain at some length, "find that on the whole boys are less likely than girls to experience bad effects attributable to sexual incidents with adults.") It is not sexual contacts per se that pose problems for children, the authors argue, but rather the cultural prejudices by which most members of society judge such acts. "The damag-

ing effects on children of intimate but non-penetrative contacts with adults," note the authors in a section on "cultural relativity," "are clearly psychological rather than physical and to a considerable extent dependent upon how such situations are viewed in the society in which the child has been brought up."

Again, and as Hanna Rosin and NAMBLA fans everywhere will appreciate, the study also emphasizes the positive side of man-boy love for the boy in question. As one typical paragraph has it:

There is a considerable amount of evidence that some boys are quite happy in relationships with adult homosexual men so long as the affair does not come to light and cause scandal or police action. . . . The great majority [of boys in a 1987 "study"] came from apparently normal homes, but were pleased to have additional attention and patronage from a devoted adult and willingly went along with his sexual requirements.

Parents everywhere will be relieved to learn that pedophiles themselves are not the predators of popular imaginings, but congenial well-wishers much like Edmund White's alluring Petrouchka. "Men who approach boys," the social scientists write in conclusion, "are generally looking for what amounts to a love relationship." Thus, "they employ gradual and gentle persuasion. The average pederast is no more seeking a rape-style confrontation

than is the average heterosexual when looking for a congenial adult partner . . ."

At a time when almost every kind of advocacy comes equipped with statistical batteries, it should come as no surprise that pedophiles and their allies, too, have acquired their own pseudo-scientific apparatus. Only the unsophisticated would be surprised to find such a numerological polemic put forward by a reputable publishing house and advertised in the Barnes and Noble book catalog. But then, only the unsophisticated stand in need of the reeducation its pages offer. And there, to return to the figure of Larry Don McQuay, is where the matter of pedophilia chic would seem to stand. In one corner, enraged parents from across the country screaming for help in protecting their children; in the other, desiccated salonistes who have taken to wondering languidly whether a taste for children's flesh is really so indefensible after all. And they wonder why there's a culture war. ♦

HANDS DOWN, THE
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ALFRED C. KINSEY.

WHY BIBI WON

By Charles Krauthammer

Not since the nuclear freeze hysteria of the early 1980s has the American press so lost its compass, so forfeited even the pretense of objectivity, as it did covering the recent Israeli election. (The parallel is not accidental, both frenzies triggered by the specter of right-wing warmongers come to power.) The demonization of Bibi Netanyahu has been thorough and near universal. Everywhere, from the front page to the editorial page, a vote for him was explained—and thus decried—as a rejection of peace, a surrender to fear, an end of everything good and hopeful and promising wrought by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres.

The apotheosis of this trend was a Tom Friedman column in the *New York Times* painting Netanyahu and his Likud party as the moral equivalent of Gennadi Zyuganov and the Russian Communist party. (They're running a close race for control of another country of interest to the United States.) On the one hand, you have a collection of Stalinist hacks who believe that Russia, at eleven time-zones wide, is too small for national dignity. On the other hand, you have a party of center-right free-market democrats who believe that Israel, at eight miles wide (it becomes so on the day the West Bank becomes a Palestinian state) is too small for national survival. To compare one to the other is more than absurd. It is scandalous.

But effective. I actually heard Steven Roberts of *U.S. News & World Report*, an otherwise estimable journalist, parrot this line on a radio talk show just a few days before the election. Friedman's column was a nadir of sorts. But he had plenty of company at the bottom.

Now that Netanyahu has won, the media, having failed to prevent the calamity, are busy trying to undo it. In place of apocalyptic predictions, they are back with revisionist history. The object is to delegitimize

Netanyahu's victory by explaining that it was not a victory—and not Netanyahu's—after all.

II

One favorite theme is that Netanyahu was elected by Yigal Amir, Rabin's assassin. This is the ultimate delegitimation of a democratic election, there being no more serious charge than that the result was in fact obtained by violence. And it rests on the assertion that Rabin "would have certainly beaten Mr. Netanyahu." (Friedman again.)

First, no one can ever know for sure. But second, a study of the data strongly supports the conclusion that Rabin would have lost. Consider:

At the time of Rabin's assassination, he was in a dead heat with Netanyahu in the polls. And we now know that the polls underestimated Netanyahu's support by about five percentage points.

How do we know? From the actual election data. The polls showed Netanyahu behind by three to five points on election day when, in reality, he won the real vote by one. And we know why the polls were wrong. The polls undercounted two Netanyahu constituencies: (a) Orthodox Jews, who don't talk to pollsters, and (b) Russian immigrants, who lie to them. (Understandably. They come from a country where, when a stranger calls up on the phone and asks you whom you support politically, the correct answer is not "the opposition.")

In other words, if the election had been held the day before Rabin's assassination, Rabin would have lost. Lost bigger than Peres.

Wouldn't the campaign have changed things? Well, we know that in the actual campaign Netanyahu overcame a 20-point deficit. Sure, the Hamas bombings helped close the gap. But by what logic should we assume that Hamas would have desisted from outrages

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during a Rabin campaign when it did not during Peres's? And anyway, Netanyahu would not have needed a post-bombing boost. He was already, as we've seen, five points ahead.

Far from electing Netanyahu, the Rabin assassination was, politically, the worst thing that happened to his candidacy. It demoralized Likud and turned much of the country against it. It gave Labor an instant 20-point lead. And it gave the Labor cause the kind of aura of sacredness that in 1964 propelled Lyndon Johnson to the greatest landslide in postwar American history.

Rabin as martyr was a far more serviceable political instrument than Rabin as candidate ever was. The living Rabin had character and courage. But he had no halo. Rabin's ghost was quite useful to Labor. Indeed, Leah Rabin complained bitterly and publicly after the election that Peres had not made enough use of it.

III

The other theme meant to delegitimize Netanyahu's victory is that Israel did not really choose, it split. The margin was so narrow that the contest remains, politically speaking, too close to call. Netanyahu's was a cheap victory, a squeaker. Therefore, although he may have won, he earned no mandate to govern.

Now, when Rabin won election in 1992 by the slimmest of margins and ruled with but a two-seat majority in the Knesset, one did not hear the claim that he lacked a mandate. Nor when Rabin rammed through the most radical peace policy in Israel's history. He did that not with new elections, not with a referendum, but with a one-vote Knesset margin.

Indeed, Rabin and then Peres did not just transform the country in the absence of a mandate. They betrayed what mandate they had. In their slim election victory of 1992, they made two very explicit promises: no giving up the Golan Heights to Syria, and no negotiation with the PLO. Perhaps they were wise to betray both commitments. But they had no mandate to do so. And when the policy was finally put to the electoral test, it failed.

By one percent only, you say. Well, such margins are not unheard of in democracies. Netanyahu's margin of victory is larger than Nixon's in 1968, five times larger than Kennedy's in 1960. More important, however, among the constituency most put at risk by the Rabin-Peres peace policy, the Israeli Jews, Netanyahu

won by a very substantial 11 percentage points (55.5 to 44.4 percent). To put that again in an American context, that is a margin wider than that of any challenger to win the American presidency since 1932. Clinton and Bush, Reagan and Carter, Nixon and Kennedy, even Eisenhower—all won their initial term with a smaller margin and less support than Netanyahu in his initial run enjoyed among Israeli Jews.

And after all, it is Israeli Jews who are the target of Palestinian terrorists. It is their homes, their future, their aspirations, their very existence that are most threatened by the Palestinian state that Peres had de facto endorsed. Among those directly jeopardized by Peres's policies, a solid majority voted "no." No squeaker here.

Moreover, looking at the Knesset vote, the popular verdict on Peres's peace is equally clear. In the old Knesset, those parties that supported the peace process (the Labor-Meretz coalition plus the Arab parties) had 61 seats. The elections reduced their number in the new Knesset to 52. By every measure Labor's path was soundly rejected.

Early on election night, when Peres was projected to win with 50.3 percent, Labor's Yael Dayan was asked whether such a thin majority would be mandate enough to complete the even more radical peace policy that Peres was planning for the next four years. Dayan defiantly answered that all they needed was 50 percent plus one vote. With that they could do whatever they wished. Now that the tables have turned, we have a sudden demand for landslides.

IV

A final theme of the delegitimizers is that it was Hamas with its suicide bombings that elected Netanyahu. This is a half truth that totally misses the larger point: The election turned not just on fear of exploding buses but on their political meaning.

The Israeli election would have turned out differently if the terrorists killing Jews were merely uncontrollable rogue elements clearly rejected by Palestinian leadership and Palestinian society. If the Palestinian people had treated their killers the way mainstream Israeli society treated Baruch Goldstein, author of the Hebron massacre, Peres would have won. Why? Because it would have vindicated the fundamental premise of Peres's peace policy: a Palestinian change of heart. A Palestinian society turning against Jew-

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murderers would have signified a Palestinian society sincerely turning towards peace and reconciliation.

Unfortunately, it did not happen that way. Instead, Israelis saw on their TV screens a Palestinian society that treated these bombers as martyrs and heroes. The largest rally in the history of the Palestinian people occurred at the funeral of the “Engineer,” the man who masterminded the suicide bombings of more than 35 Israelis. Arafat himself declared him an official “martyr” and had his forces honor the “Engineer” with a 21-gun salute.

Israelis saw, too, a rally in the newly liberated West Bank town of Qalqilya, in which the crowd cheered as a mockup of a “Dizengoff Number 5” Israeli bus was set afire. They saw a Palestinian Authority that had made its peace with Hamas and not a single serious attempt to outlaw or close it down. They saw a Palestinian leadership that could not even bring itself to fulfill its obligation under the Oslo accords to revise its charter to eliminate the clauses calling for the destruction of Israel. (Cleverly, the PNC simply asserted that the charter was changed without changing a word of it, kicking the issue over to a committee charged with producing the actual changes six months hence. Don’t hold your breath.)

Palestinian terrorists did destroy Peres’s electoral chances. But only because they were clearly seen as acting with the acquiescence and blessing of Palestinian society, thus betraying the truth that for the Palestinians, Oslo was just a tactic to achieve their national ends, not a real recognition and acceptance of Israel’s.

This was most vividly conveyed in Arafat’s appeal to the PNC on the vote for the (apparent) change in the Palestinian charter. He never invoked the kind of ringing language of reconciliation and acceptance that Rabin had expressed on the White House lawn and Peres expressed daily to describe his vision of a new Middle East of coexistence and cooperation. Arafat told his delegates instead not to allow just a few words to stand in the way of regaining their land. The implication was clear: These are mere words, subject to

change, fleeting, ephemeral. Say them—sincere or not, it does not matter—because the saying will get you land. And land is real.

Hamas did not defeat Peres. Arafat, who was Peres’s running mate, did—he and the Palestinian mainstream and their casual symbiosis with Hamas.

V

The revisionists cannot understand why Netanyahu won because they simply refuse to see Israel as it is. At the heart of the Western misunderstanding of Likud is the distinction between peace and security. Netanyahu campaigned on the quite unassailable proposition that there is no such distinction, that peace without security is meaningless, that if peace means anything it means at the very minimum a cessation of political violence. (After all, “armistice” and “truce”—lesser forms of peace—mean cease-fire. Peace must mean at least that.)

Peres adopted the view that security was not part of peace but something parallel, separate, subsequent to peace. The demand for “security now” was portrayed—by Peres, and his Western echoes—as some additional, heavy-handed, indeed extralegal demand on the “peace process,” a gratuitous addition to the

Palestinians’ obligations under “peace.”

In fact, Netanyahu was adding nothing. Under the Oslo accords, in return for all that Israel has delivered—military withdrawal, political recognition, Gaza, West Bank autonomy, foreign aid, free elections—the Palestinians had but two obligations. One was a cessation of terrorism. (The other was changing the Palestine National Charter.) Security was explicitly to be part of this peace. The dichotomy between security and peace so resolutely maintained in the West (where the commentators are at a safe distance from exploding Israeli buses) was seen by most Israelis as not just logically absurd but historically perverse.

The election hinged not on whether land would be given up—land had already been given up and some more would undoubtedly have to be given up in the



Benjamin Netanyahu

Kent Lamm

future—but whether it would be given up for a paper peace without security. In other words, for nothing. The premise of Netanyahu's platform was that the peace process could not continue without reciprocity. And reciprocity meant that the Palestinians had to deliver real *peace now*, not, as Peres had it, at the end of the process as some final payoff when everything was tied up in a ribbon.

Indeed, the whole point of the interim, progressive nature of the PLO-Israel agreements was to make sure that at each stage in the process both sides delivered on their commitments. Peres's contention that this was too much to ask of the Palestinians, that true peace would only come at the very end when everything had been given up, undermined and contradicted the very premise of the staged process he himself had initiated.

The Israeli electorate concluded that the peace process as conducted by Labor—unilateral withdrawal with no reciprocal obligations on the Palestinians other than to wait and demand more—was a losing proposition for Israel, not only dangerous but absurd given the power relations between the two parties. Never in the history of negotiation had the overwhelmingly powerful party given away so much for so little. Peres promised more of the same. A “land-for-peace” election he might have won. A “land-for-this?” election he could not possibly.

VI

Reciprocity, not land, was the key to Peres's defeat. It will have to be the key to Netanyahu's peace policy.

The days of Israeli unilateralism are over. What will be different now is that Likud will not hide, rationalize, or look the other way at Palestinian violations of the peace accords. When Arafat makes a speech calling for jihad, calling the suicide-bombers martyrs, invoking Mohammed's example of making a treaty with infidels that he later broke when he had more power, the government of Israel will neither ignore it nor explain it away. It will highlight it. And it will make further Israeli concessions contingent on changed Palestinian behavior. The Palestinians will be faced with the choice of either living up to their reciprocal obligations or seeing their hopes for autonomy, let alone sovereignty, dashed.

What might reciprocity mean in practice? Let me suggest:

Israel is obliged under Oslo to withdraw from Hebron. Peres had agreed to do so by mid-June. Hebron withdrawal is being touted as a test of Netanyahu's sincerity about continuing the peace process. Yet it offers an opportunity to make reci-

procity the hallmark of his peace policy.

Palestinians were committed by the original Oslo agreement of September 1993 to change their charter to eliminate references to the destruction of Israel and to armed struggle to effect that destruction. Israel implemented the Oslo I (Gaza and Jericho) agreement without Arafat's lifting a finger to fulfill that provision.

Then in the Oslo II agreement, Arafat sold that rug a second time. In return for Israel's evacuating the major West Bank towns, he promised again to amend the charter. The deadline was May 7 of this year. It has not happened yet. As noted above, on April 24, Arafat delivered a statement from the PNC that the charter was amended—but no changes were made. That must come from the committee that reports back in six months.

Why not simply state that Israel will fulfill its part of Oslo II as soon as the Palestinians have fulfilled theirs? That withdrawal from Hebron will take place, say, 72 hours after the Palestinian charter is changed. But not before. *Quid pro quo*. Such a principled stand of continuing the peace process but only with reciprocity would set the tone for Netanyahu's “new path” to peace, distinguishing it from Peres's frantic and unilateral version while honoring its objectives.

VII

The world is not happy with Netanyahu's victory. It is much happier with the tame, cosmopolitan Israel of Shimon Peres. It prefers a Jewish state obedient to the wishes, compliant with the aspirations, desperate for the approval of the “international community.” Most of all, it likes Jews in retreat—giving up land, surrendering claims, calling on the sympathy of the world when the bombs go off. What offends the West about Netanyahu is not that he might breach this or that paragraph of Oslo, but that he represents the kind of Zionist assertiveness that is an affront to the cherished vision of the pliant Jew, the Jew as victim.

Menachem Begin tried to play the proud-Zion role, but his air of schoolmaster pedantry made his attempt at swagger faintly ridiculous. In Netanyahu, ruthlessness combines with charm, muscularity with brains. He can fight and he can argue. No one yet knows if he can govern, but one can safely say that he will be the best exponent of Zionist assertiveness since Moshe Dayan.

Netanyahu does not live for the Nobel Prize, nor, as he said, to tour the capitals of Europe with Yasir Arafat. Peres led the Jews in retreat to the applause of the world. Netanyahu will demand something more durable than applause. That is why he won. ♦

THE MAN WHO WAS MUGGERIDGED BY REALITY

By Joseph Epstein

For roughly twenty years, between the 1950s and the 1970s, Malcolm Muggeridge was perhaps the most amusing writer in the English-speaking world. I do not say the wittiest, or the most humorous, but the most amusing. More efficiently than anyone else, he could set one to musing, chiefly about how absurd was the world in which we live. Muggeridge's knack, his trick, his *shtick*—for before long it hardened into *shtick*—was not merely to point out that the emperor had no clothes, but to go a decisive step further to note that the poor fellow was quite without kneecaps, a bellybutton, a scrotum.

Muggeridge had mastered the tone of detachment, which allowed him to ask the most fundamental questions as if he were a superior being from another planet where they arranged things like sex, politics, and journalism rather better than we pathetic earthlings do. To master this tone, a writer must be able to distance himself by taking up a sufficiently high view of the spectacle carried on below. From this height, we all appear comic if sedulous apes, with our inchoate ideals, our not-very-secret appetites, our ludicrous pretensions, the grander the more ludicrous.

At his best, Muggeridge read as if he were Gibbon in Rome living right there in the midst of the decline and fully, almost happily, anticipating the fall. Except that Muggeridge played the decline and

fall for laughs, the joke being how funny our contemporary agitations are judged by the standard of eternity.

Judged *sub specie aeternitatis*, of course, everything is a joke, including Winston Churchill, who just might have saved the Western world. "To me," wrote Muggeridge of Churchill, "he has always been a slightly ridiculous figure, mouth-ing the rhetoric of a past age to sustain the fantasies of the present one. It was precisely this, admittedly, that was required in 1940 to maintain the pretense, while waiting for Russia and America to come into the war, that we English were continuing to wage it. Once they were in, Churchill's role was exhausted."

So it went in the world according to Muggeridge, where we all are little puppets, making our jerky movements, playing our momentary roles, till we are swept off stage. Here he is again, in a full paragraph from his essay "England, Whose England?":

As in Cervantes' masterpiece, one feels today that things are out of sync. The conductor is working from one score and the orchestra from another, with consequent total confusion in the resultant performance. The players have learned their lines from another play than the one which is being performed; they make false entrances and exits, stumble over unfamiliar scenery, and turn in vain to the prompter for help and guidance. There is no correlation between word and deed, between the aspirations ostensibly entertained and what actually happens, between (to use Blake's dichotomy) what is seen with, and what is seen through, the eye.

Although he taught in India and

Egypt as a young man, worked in British intelligence in early middle age, and wrote a few novels in between, Malcolm Muggeridge was for the better part of his life a "mere" journalist, to supply the standard adjective. He began in newspapers, working first for the *Manchester Guardian*, then going on to work for Lord Beaverbrook on the London *Evening Standard*, and later for the *Daily Telegraph*. He also wrote for the English and American intellectual weeklies, and perhaps achieved his greatest fame as a television man of all work: journalist, interviewer, documentary-maker.

He wished to be more than a mere journalist, wanted in fact to be a writer, but journalism seemed to fit his skitterish temperament. Besides, he was pleased by its rewards, not least the seat it afforded on the apron of the circus. Convinced of the transience of all human events, he even seemed to take a mildly perverse delight in the transience of his own work; as the caravan passed, he was content for the better part of his life to be among the barking dogs.

In collecting some of his stronger magazine pieces for *The Most of Malcolm Muggeridge* in 1966, when he was himself 63, Muggeridge took the occasion to note the staggering output of words any working journalist looses on the world: "a vast verbal outpouring, dealing for the most part with topics of no present relevance—notices of books and plays whose authors have long been forgotten, editorials on once burning controversies which now matter to no one, obitu-

Joseph Epstein, author of our June 3 cover story on American arts policy, is editor of the American Scholar.

aries already out of date when their subjects died.” Striking the characteristic Muggeridgean note of the utter, comic uselessness of it all, he continues: “Appeals, exhortations, solemn warnings, tributes; massive features and tiny gossip par[agraph]s, turnovers and middles; every variety of shape, size and substance—from pulp to pulp. Oh! printed word, where is they sting?”

Muggeridge’s own prose, in its day, could have a devastating sting. As the Moscow correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, he was the first Western journalist to report that Stalin was systematically starving his own people in the early 1930s under the aegis of collectivization, for which he, Muggeridge, was roundly denounced, in the Soviet and Western press alike, as a reactionary and a liar. This took courage, physical and intellectual, and not least spiritual. I say spiritual because, though Muggeridge had gone to the Soviet Union under the auspices of the *Guardian*, he initially intended, along with his wife, to settle there, thinking it a “new kind of civilization.”

But it did not take him long to see through it. “I’ve seen,” he wrote to Beatrice Webb, his wife’s aunt and one of those great Western boosters of the Soviet Union called “useful idiots” by Lenin, “I know I’ve seen the essence of the thing, its spirit, the mood it engenders, the kind of person in whom it invests power, the set of values—moral, aesthetic, spiritual—it encourages. And I’m more sure than I’ve ever been sure of anything in my life that this is bad, and that it is based on the most evil and most cruel elements in human nature.” Others saw it, too, and knew very well what they saw, but hadn’t the intellectual honesty that Muggeridge had to announce that they

had found yet another heart of darkness, this time in a cold climate.

The habit of exposé, begun early in Muggeridge, was to stay with him through his life. Nothing was as it appeared; everything was much worse. Nothing, certainly, was safe from his satirical treatment. In his early years, his fiction tended usually to be about the job he had most recently left (*Picture Palace* is about life on the *Manchester Guardian*) or about recent experience (*Winter in Moscow*); these books, *romans* with feet of litigious clay, were nicely loaded up with characters drawn directly from life, tempting many among them to sue for libel.

Later Muggeridge would settle for the almost systematic slaughter of sacred cows. He was early to mock the British monarchy; he accused Winston Churchill of being too old, if not gaga, to govern; he averred that Eisenhower would make a better king than president and proposed him to Americans as such; and he was the first to mock—quite rightly—the apotheosis of the then-recently dead President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in an essay titled, after Evelyn Waugh’s comic-grotesque novel about funerary rites in Los Angeles, “The Loved One.”

Between 1952 and 1957, Muggeridge was editor of *Punch*, the famous English humor magazine—famous, I should say, for never being all that humorous. From the middle of the 19th century, people had begun to say about *Punch* that “it used to be better.” They kept on saying it till Muggeridge took over, when they began saying that it was outrageous and ought to be banned. Before him the magazine, in the words of one of its contributors, was composed of “well-written articles about nothing in particular”; and many of the senior staff, such was the general air of complacency, sent their articles directly to the

printer without showing them to any editor. Muggeridge, by running features attacking the monarchy and the Church of England, put paid to this kind of complacency.

Muggeridge was no less iconoclastic as a television performer, functioning here chiefly as a *provocateur*-interviewer. In this role, he would cheerfully spur on a perfectly drunk Brendan Behan, ask Salvador Dali what happens to his mustaches at night (“They droop,” was the answer), or lightly mock Billy Graham. In some ways, Muggeridge, in his irreverent mode, helped make possible the strain of English satire that emerged with the comedy review *Beyond the Fringe* and the television program *That Was The Week That Was*.

I saw an example of Muggeridge’s television handiwork one day in 1970 on Michigan Avenue in Chicago in front of the Chicago Tribune Building, where he was stopping Chicagoans on their lunch hour to ask how they thought Wilson would do in the general election. The chief replies were “Wilson who?” and “What election?” The answer was Harold Wilson, and the election was the British one forthcoming. This was Muggeridge’s little way of making plain to his countrymen that they were now quite nicely out of it, thank you very much.

What sort of man found delight in such occupations? In his two-volume autobiography, Muggeridge doesn’t give us much help with this question. *Chronicles of Wasted Time* is the title he gave to the first volume; and he retained it as the subtitle to his second. In these books he recounted his socialist upbringing, his education, his travels, his life in journalism, but, smooth as the overall performance is, something is missing at the center. The first volume begins with a chapter titled “A Part in Search of a Play” and the second volume closes with the interment of the ashes of the

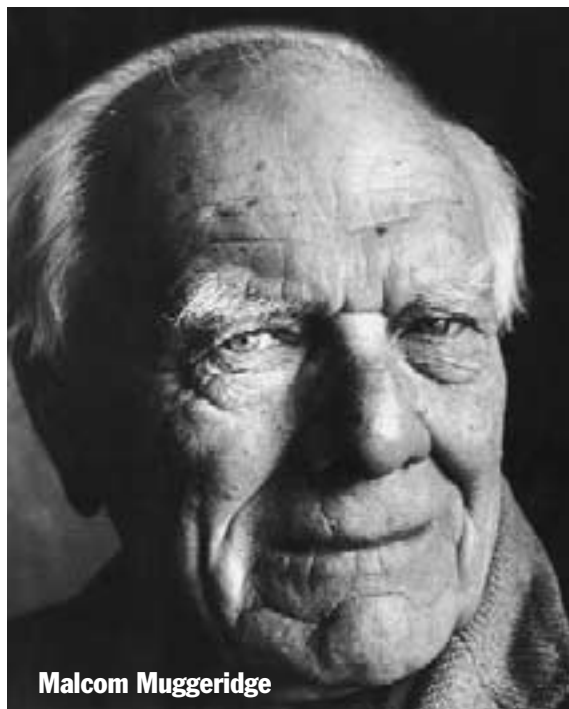
Webbs in Westminster Abbey, which, in Muggeridge's reading, meant the end of the empty dream of socialism as heaven here on earth. The second volume was published in 1974; its author had 17 years yet to live. The autobiography ends on the words: "Another way had to be found and explored."

Richard Ingrams's biography *Muggeridge* (HarperCollins, \$27.50) takes up the meaning of those words. It is an excellent book, a model of the kind of biographical study that is less and less nowadays written but to which biography needs to return. At a perfect length of 264 pages, it seeks portraiture through understanding, not, as biographies in our day increasingly do, definitiveness through exhausting detail. Ingrams knew and admired Muggeridge, but admired him with full knowledge of his weaknesses and flaws. He deals in revelation without being interested in scandal. His selection of details seems proportionate and artistically correct. Finishing his book, one feels that one doesn't need to know more than he has chosen to tell.

Ingrams writes, really, as a friend. He has written about Malcolm Muggeridge before in *God's Apology*, a charming little volume about three friends: Muggeridge, the journalist Hugh Kingsmill, and the popular biographer Hesketh Pearson. (The title comes from a remark of Kingsmill's: "Friends are God's apology for relations," or relatives.) In that book, Ingrams notes that "there is a fourth friend involved, too—myself." He goes on to explain that through his friendship with Malcolm Muggeridge "I have been able to enjoy a kind of posthumous friendship with Kingsmill and Pearson and from talking to

him come to cherish certain books which, had I not known him, would perhaps have meant little to me."

Ingrams had first met Muggeridge in 1963, when the former was one of the editors of *Private Eye*, a magazine of no-holds-barred English satire of which Muggeridge was one of the guiding saints. In the introduction to *God's Apology*, he says Muggeridge "is the only person I know in whose company I have never experienced one moment of boredom. At the same



time I owe to him several insights into the nature of power and ambition which have influenced my feelings about the political world in a profound way." As for the three friends—Muggeridge, Kingsmill, Pearson—Ingrams writes that all three had "in common a number of admirable and to me endearing characteristics—a love of England and English literature; a dislike of intellectuals; a deep suspicion of all institutions and any form of collective activity; and a shared sense of humor with no traces in it of snob-

bery, nor any of the class consciousness which has vitiated so much modern writing."

From Ingrams's lucid account one is able to make out without any great difficulty the figure in Muggeridge's carpet. Muggeridge's father, whom he greatly loved, was a Fabian socialist. Religion was no part of the young Malcolm's upbringing. He was pleased to have avoided public schools—and hence many of the snobberies and rich sexual complications that pop up in all those English memoirs about

Eton and Winchester days—and when he went to Cambridge it was to read for a natural sciences degree. He was brought up oddly detached and remained that way through much of his life. Ingrams remarks on Muggeridge never having had any real interest in possessions, nor being an altogether happy hedonist—though on this score he was an ardent skirt chaser and a fairly heavy boozier. As a young man, his pattern was to be one in which the fires of initial enthusiasm were quickly banked by boredom and disillusionment.

Muggeridge was quite without ambition: money, power, acceptance in the highest social circles never seemed much to stir him. Even among men who should have been his political enemies—the old Stalinist Claud Cockburn is a notable example—he could show great and genuine friendliness. He was, in Ingrams's words, "incapable of a grudge against anyone," and that included Hesketh Pearson, who had a brief affair with his wife.

Nothing Muggeridge ever did, Ingrams claims, was based on calculation. He seemed not to give a damn about career. Certainly, he was ready to pitch everything away

Snowdon/HarperCollins

at any time for an amusing line. Even though he knew he was on thin ice at the BBC, he didn't in the least mind, after a discussion about Orwell's 1984, remarking before turning over the microphone, "And now back to Big Brother." Once, when meeting Khrushchev on a journalistic trip to Russia, the then-Soviet leader told him to write the truth. "Such," replied Muggeridge, "is my constant endeavor." He was undaunted.

Yet despite all the success that came his way—by his 50s, a high income and international fame were his—he was never satisfied for long. All his days he suffered stomach troubles, becoming toward the end of his life a vegetarian. All his days, too, beginning with his years at Cambridge, he felt a pull toward religion. As early as 1934, the writer Lettice Cooper predicted he would become a Roman Catholic, which he did—but in 1982, fully 48 years later. Ingrams speculates that Muggeridge's encounter with Mother Teresa, whose work he did so much to publicize in a BBC documentary and whose simplicity and dignity and devotion humbled him, brought him over to the church, under whose last rites he died.

A great many people were put off by the spectacle of the publicly devout Malcolm Muggeridge. "St. Mugg" was the way he was often referred to. Before his religious phase, he believed men were fools for not understanding the silly irrelevance of their lives; now he thought men fools for not understanding a being greater than they. Preaching, in his last years, seemed to come very naturally to him. It wasn't all that easy to take from such an old sinner. Hypocrisy was the common charge. In other words, Muggeridge had had very good innings as a general carouser; but now that he could no longer hold up the bat, the rest of us were to retire along with him to contem-

plate the magnificence of the Lord. La Rochefoucauld was called in as a witness for the prosecution: "We do not so much desert our appetites as they desert us."

Yet what Richard Ingrams's excellent book makes altogether persuasive is that Malcolm Muggeridge's conversion was no last-minute inspiration, an effort to pull his own badly singed chestnuts out of the fire. Everything in his life—the early socialism, the boredom, the disillusionment, the rather squalid pleasures, the lifelong

detachment—was building up to his religious conversion. This biography turns out in the end to be a much more amusing *Pilgrim's Progress*. As for the Pilgrim himself, our man Muggeridge, he gave much delight to his readers while he lived, and there is much to be thankful for in that. Whether the trajectory described by his life—from socialism to religion, in by no means easy steps—provides the edification he hoped it might is another, much murkier, yet finally quite serious question. ♦

Books

¡HASTA LA VISTA, IDIOTA!

By Mark Falcoff

A specter is haunting Latin America these days—a book that frontally attacks all of the sociological and economic foolishness that, until recently, kept the region at a developmental dead-end.

The book is a long pamphlet entitled *Manual del perfecto idiota latinoamericano* (*Manual for the Perfect Latin American Idiot*). Written by three ex-leftists, it is witty, incisive, fact-packed, and fun. What's more, although released only in April, it has already sold 100,000 copies in more than a dozen countries, an astounding success for any non-fiction work in Spanish. (The book is not yet available in English.)

The authors know whereof they speak. Carlos Alberto Montaner is a Cuban who played an active role in Castro's revolution and now lives in exile in Spain. Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza is a Colombian, a former guerrilla and one of the founders of

the Cuban press agency Prensa Latina. Alvaro Vargas Llosa is a Peruvian, the son of the novelist and a distinguished journalist in his own right, who as a student at Princeton led the charge against Ronald Reagan when the president visited in 1984. As the authors say in their prologue, the problem isn't so much being an idiot—lots of Latins have been *that* at one time or another (including the authors); the problem is persisting, against all evidence, in remaining one.

The subject of the *Manual* is Latin America's intellectual underdevelopment—its tendency to continue in error, its preference for taking comfort in victimhood rather than examining reality. Since the Second World War, the region's political leaders have drunk deeply from the fount of "dependency theory," a mishmash of nationalism and Marxism-lite. Ideas, as we know, often have consequences, and in this case they explain how potentially rich countries have become poor.

On one hand, there is the Latin

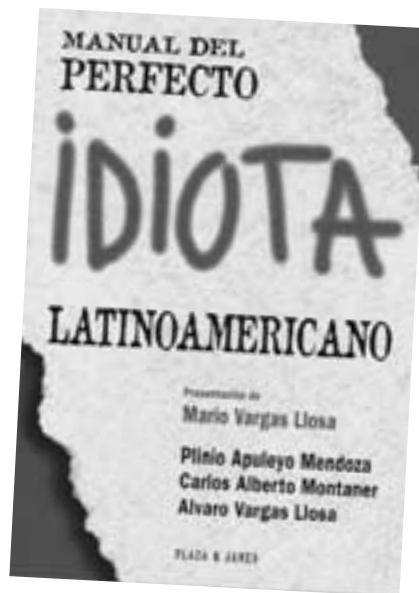
Mark Falcoff is resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

American state, which operates for the exclusive benefit of politicians and their clients, at the expense of rich and poor alike. On the other, there is a hostile attitude toward foreign investment that—far from encouraging the growth of national industry—tends to discourage productive economic activity of any kind. In order to finance bloated bureaucracies, oversized military establishments, and money-losing state enterprises, the Latins have neglected functions that no government should delegate. This, write our authors, is what explains why Latin American schools often have no windows, blackboards, or desks, and hospitals no sheets, medicines, or surgical equipment.

Rather than face up to these facts, the Latin American idiot prefers to blame others—the United States, the multinationals, debts owed to foreign banks. “We love being incompetent and free of all responsibility,” say the authors. “We derive morbid pleasure from believing that we were robbed. We practice an imaginary masochism; we luxuriate in the fantasy of suffering.” The authors have chosen the term “idiot” to describe a particular kind of Latin mentality in recognition that these notions are not confined to serious Marxists. Indeed, such notions have long been the stock in trade of conventional democratic politicians throughout the region (some of whom are quoted, to devastating effect, in an appendix). They also form the staple of “liberation theology,” brought to Central America by Spanish priests bored with democracy in their homeland; of flag-waving xenophobia, favored by military men blissfully ignorant of economics; and of anti-Americanism, practiced by intellectuals of all tendencies.

Particularly piquant is the chapter on the “popular church,” a chimera that received much attention in the United States during the

last decade and that even now, in the guise of liberation theology, leads a twilight existence in some mainstream seminaries. As the authors point out, the poverty favored by liberation theology is spiritual, not material; the “popular church” reverses the traditional relationship between Christianity and worldly goods. As for its economics, the authors remind us that “you cannot redistribute what does not exist, and . . . simply to



divide up what does into equal portions amounts to nothing more than socializing poverty.”

Equally perceptive is the chapter on anti-Americanism, one of the region’s most important exports for decades. U.S. visitors are often told, “It isn’t the American people we hate, it’s their government.” To which the authors respond, “Wrong! Governments change, but the hate remains.” For gringo-baiters, it doesn’t matter whether the United States is led by Kennedy or Nixon, Carter or Reagan. What is different is the nature of anti-Americanism in Latin America. The authors describe it as a kind of racism-in-reverse. Whereas the Nazis hated the Jews because they considered them inferior, here

“the object is hated . . . because it is assumed . . . to be superior. What we are dealing with . . . is not an ideological question but a significant social pathology: difficult to diagnose and harder still to treat.”

The *Manual* also contains a brisk review of Latin American history from a sharply revisionist perspective. We are reminded that the liberator Simón Bolívar, far from being an incipient social revolutionary, was “obsessed by the racial problem” and determined at all costs to avoid conflict between classes and colors. Pancho Villa, legendary on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border, was an illiterate cattle thief who gloried not only in shooting prisoners but in forcing them to execute one another. Similar shafts are directed at Nicaragua’s General Augusto Sandino, Argentina’s General Juan Perón, and Peru’s General Juan Velasco Alvarado (“You can get an idea of the patriotic fervor of his regime by the fact that he officially abolished Christmas and expelled from Peru the most fearsome of its enemies—Donald Duck”).

Of course, the supreme revolutionary icon is Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. For the idiot, the Cuban revolution is “an old romance that never really dies.” This is one area where one might suspect the idiot would have learned something, because after nearly four decades of actual practice, Cuba is demonstrably poorer today than it was when Castro took power, both in absolute and relative terms. Our idiot is sometimes willing to admit this, but then tries to crawl out of his tight spot by assuring us that everything would be all right in Cuba if it weren’t for the American trade embargo.

This overlooks the fact that since 1959 the island has received Soviet aid amounting to *four* Marshall

Plans or *three times* the amount of U.S. aid given to all of Latin America under the Alliance for Progress.

Cuban Communists like to boast that they have a doctor for every 220 persons, which when compared with countries like Guatemala, Honduras, or Panama is superficially impressive. But, as the authors point out, Denmark has a doctor for every 450 persons. Does anyone really believe that Cuba has better health services than Denmark? "[I]t would have been better if Cuba had spent less money on medical education and more on hospital services." The authors further point out that Chile, which has taken precisely the opposite economic road from Cuba, is the only country in Latin America where extreme poverty has actually declined over the past ten years.

That a book of this kind could be published at all, much less become a runaway bestseller, is a sure sign that new winds are blowing in Latin America. But Latin American idiots are not taking the matter lying down. Accustomed to a virtual monopoly of information and opinion and total control of publicly funded educational and cultural institutions—and armed with powerful sanctions against dissenters—they have leapt to the attack. *La República*, an influential daily in Lima, published its review alongside a photograph of naked starving children.

One Colombian critic deemed the book "one of the greatest examples of stupidity ever written," though he admitted he hadn't actually gotten around to reading it. Another accused Apuleyo, Montaner, and Vargas Llosa of "trying to turn themselves into gendarmes of the intellect." Still another seems not to have read the book either, since she claimed that, in it, the authors defend U.S. military interventions in Latin America, which is precisely the opposite of the truth.

Thus, *Manual for the Perfect Latin American Idiot* is a bombshell, detonated at a propitious moment. Long before the United States contracted the disease of political correctness, it had reached epidemic

proportions in Latin America. The reception of this book suggests that the Latins are finally bidding farewell to idiocy. Is it too much to hope that Americans will soon do the same? ♦

Music

VAN MORRISON'S HYMNAL

By Mark Gauvreau Judge

In the world of rock'n'roll, as in the world of sports, a performer is often considered over the hill at an age when some people are in graduate school. Since the 1950s, pop music has celebrated the young and ephemeral; maturity, longevity, and ties to traditions have all become anathema to restless insouciance and a watchful eye out for the newest, most outrageous thing.

The hegemony of this cult of the cutting edge helps explain the relative obscurity of Van Morrison, the Irish pop singer. Morrison turned 50 last year, which in the world of MTV makes him yesterday's news. This is unfortunate, because in the last few years Morrison has released the best music of his career—a body of work that provides a rich spiritual counterpoint to grunge's anger and rap's prurience.

Morrison himself is partly to blame for his disappearing act. After 25 years of writing and performing songs that quickly became rock'n'roll classics—"Gloria," "Moondance," and "Brown-Eyed Girl," to name a few—the singer went into a tailspin in the 1980s. His music became insipid, and he seemed debilitated by his legendary stage fright and hostility to the

press—attributes that make it difficult to win fans and create any kind of buzz. In 1991, however, he renewed himself with the release of *Hymns to the Silence*, a double CD.

Morrison was raised in Protestant Belfast, and his father was a fanatical collector of American records. While his neighbors were humming to Rosemary Clooney, Van was taking in Muddy Waters, Hank Williams, Charlie Parker, and Woody Guthrie, as well as gospel and hymns from the Church of England. *Hymns* is a paean to these myriad musical influences; it expertly navigates jazz, hymns, rhythm and blues, and pop in a celebration of the music of what Morrison romantically refers to as "the days before rock'n'roll."

After the release of *Hymns*, Morrison found himself again a critical, if not commercial, darling, and he has since put out several top-notch records. The best of them is the stunning live performance *A Night in San Francisco*, where he rises to remarkable heights—most notably when he bleeds his pastoral meditation "In the Garden" into Sam Cooke's "You Send Me."

Morrison is a Christian, but his faith is grounded in what can only be described as a kind of New Age Celtic mysticism. According to the unauthorized biography *It's Too Late to Stop Now*, Morrison experienced a feeling of "spiritual ecsta-

Mark Gauvreau Judge last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD about the horrors of the Georgetown University English department.

sy" when he was three and heard the gospel great Mahalia Jackson on the record player. "It forged an indelible link in his mind between music and a sense of wonder," writes author Steve Turner.

For Morrison, music is an inseparable part of the spirituality of his life and history—particularly the Ireland of his youth. He often recalls the postwar Belfast of his childhood as a kind of Eden filled with magical evenings spent with the muses of jazz and poetry and

band leaders, Morrison fronts only first-rate backing players. Interestingly enough, the feeling created by listening to such competence is joy, an emotion that seems in short supply in rock. Joy, and a renewed appreciation of America's pre-rock popular music forms—blues, jazz, folk, and ballads—as popular art suffused with an affirmative and redemptive spirituality.

While Morrison has grown accustomed to defying pop fads, his latest release really cuts the rope to

the clever melodies he devises. (This is probably why he is so fond of spoken-word meditations.) However, on *How Long*, like his other albums, Morrison lets exceptional musicianship carry the songs. Furthermore, in the swing era, many blues singers were called "shouters," and while range was important, perfect pitch often lost out to depth of feeling. Morrison's deep growl sounds appropriately weathered in the rolling cover of Louis Jordan's "Early in the Morning" and the jump of Cannonball Adderley's "Sack o' Woe." He even manages to sound sultry covering his own "Moondance."

On the ballads, Morrison is somewhat weaker. "Who Can I Turn To?" sounds like karaoke, and "That's Life" is death. Morrison would have done well to hand these more delicate numbers over to another singer, as he did with several songs on *A Night in San Francisco*. However, his deliberate drawl on Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer's "Blues in the Night" reveals the gorgeous hook of the song where the greats who have covered it (Ella Fitzgerald, Joe Turner) have often failed, and "Centerpiece" has enough bounce to carry it into the top 10.

That's not going to happen. Morrison hasn't been within sight of the charts since Rod Stewart scored with a cover of his drippy "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You" a few years ago. Morrison seems to have banished himself from the pop world, and with *How Long* doesn't give any sign of making a compromise. Wise move. He's too good for MTV, where one finds musicians who, to quote the Mose Allison song Morrison covers on *How Long*, have minds on vacation and mouths working overtime. ♦



Van Morrison

Chas Fagan

literature. Like Mahalia Jackson's voice, these provided rapturous experiences, and Morrison's lyrics are filled with references to Hyndford Street, where he grew up, and quotes from W.B. Yeats, John Donne, and William Blake.

Of course, faith does not guarantee memorable music. What does is sound. This seems obvious, but the dexterity of the musicians who back Morrison is reminiscent of a musical professionalism rock'n'roll turned its back on when performers began writing, playing, and singing their own work. Like the great big-

the charts: It's a swing album. *How Long Has This Been Going On* (released by the jazz label Verve) is a compendium of jazz classics and reworkings of Morrison's songs. The band, which includes saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis, covers numbers originally performed by Lester Young, Louis Jordan, Mose Allison, and Cannonball Adderley, as well as classic ballads like the Gershwin tune of the album's title.

Morrison's voice, a rough, gravelly growl with little range, is a problematic instrument; like Bob Dylan, he often has trouble filling

Foreign Affairs

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

Bibikampf

I have been struggling sleeplessly to make sense of the Israeli elections, to understand what could have driven a country that is supposed to be what the Bible calls "a light unto the nations" into breaking the bright, warm halogen bulb of peace into a million smithereens. These elections are such a momentous event—more momentous, even, than my trip last year to Japan to uncover the new truth about the world economy—that we will all benefit from my musings about them for another three weeks, at least.

In retrospect, I wish to apologize for my

Adolf Netanyahu?

column comparing the right-wing, anti-peace, pro-settler, admitted philanderer Benjamin Netanyahu to Russian Communist presidential candidate Gennadi Zyuganov. I believe now that I did Zyuganov an injustice. As the candidate of the old Stalinists, Zyuganov at least represents a secular alternative to Boris Yeltsin. Would that the same were true of Netanyahu, whose voters are ultra-ultra Orthodox fundamentalists and therefore, to quote the former head of the Israel lobby in Washington, "smelly."

But if Zyuganov is not the appropriate

analogy, then who is? At a recent Bilderberg conference in Toronto, where sages such as myself gather to discuss foreign policy issues, I found myself in an interesting breakfast discussion on the Israeli elections with noted author David Irving and a woman previously unknown to me named Marge Schott. She, it turns out, is the owner of a sports team whose performers play a game similar to cricket.

Schott said she saw some telling parallels between Netanyahu and a world figure she has made a lifetime study of, Adolf Hitler. Irving pointed out that Hitler, too, won an election by a narrow margin. Indeed, his party did not even have a majority, but had to go into a coalition with others, just as Netanyahu will with the Orthodox, or "smelly," parties. A year later came the Nuremberg rally and the burning of the Reichstag.

Am I suggesting that Bibi Netanyahu is like Hitler? Think about the possible parallels: Hitler was the candidate of fear. Netanyahu is the candidate of fear. Hitler wrote a book. Netanyahu wrote a book. Hitler was a house painter. Netanyahu has had his house painted.

But, in the end, the analogy doesn't quite hold true. We don't know yet if Netanyahu is going to kill every Palestinian and throw the planet into a world war that will result in the destruction of 60 million people. So perhaps he isn't like Hitler. Goebbels? Maybe.